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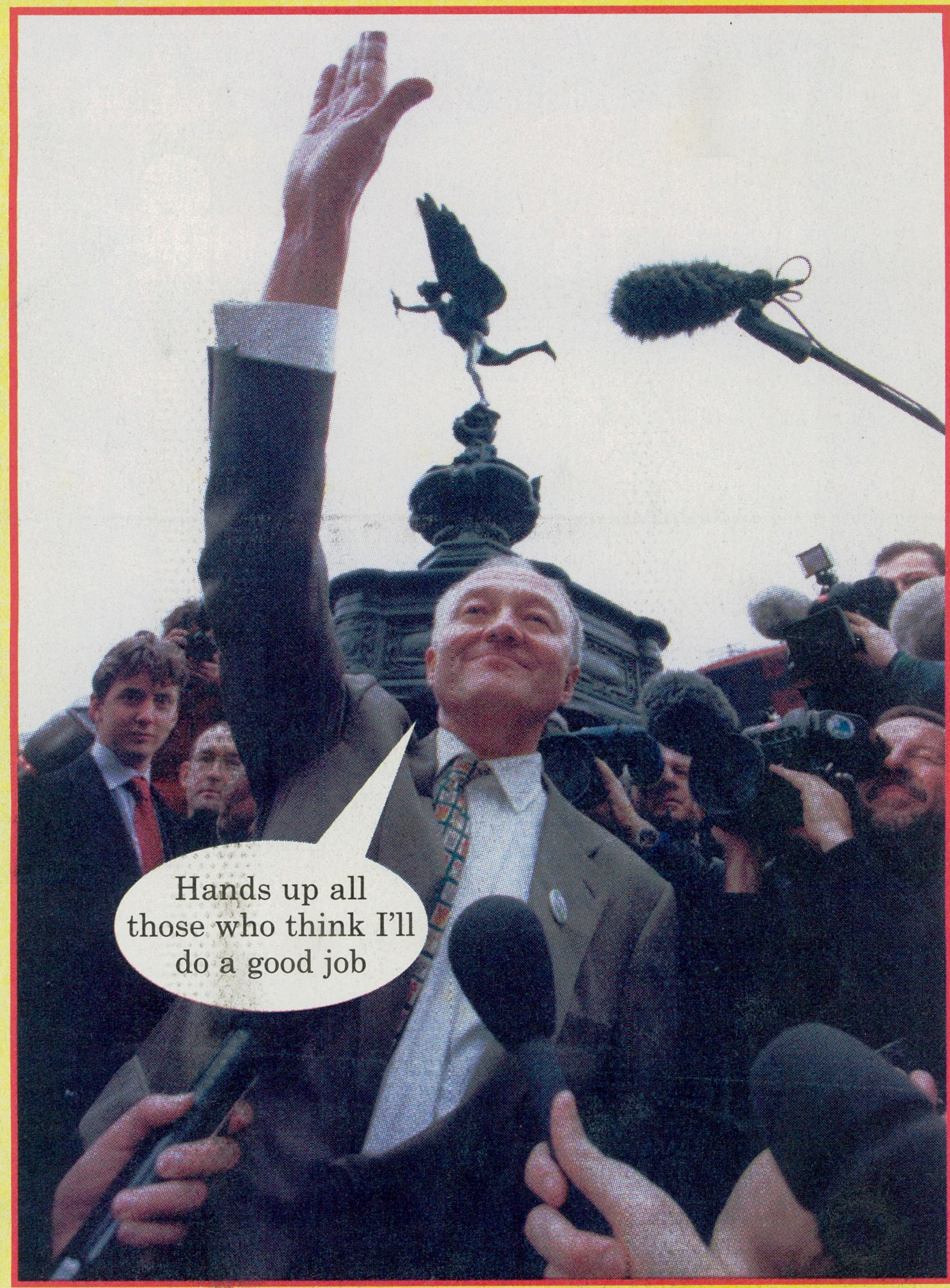

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■ **Christine** *is a 42 year old Manager from Chester. An attractive non-smoker, she enjoys social drinking, dinner parties and the cinema. She describes herself as confident and friendly.*

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*Names have been changed for reasons of privacy.

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First Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Post Code: _____

Tel No. _____

I am seriously interested in meeting a partner through Dateline.

Marital Status:

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☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

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Occupation _____

Religion: _____

Build:
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☐ Medium
☐ Large

Attractiveness:
☐ V. Attractive
☐ Attractive
☐ Average

Your Personality

Tick which traits closely describe you

☐ Affectionate ☐ Fashionable
☐ Serious ☐ Practical
☐ Considerate ☐ Conventional
☐ Shy ☐ Reliable
☐ Romantic ☐ Adventurous

Your Interests

Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.

☐ Wining/Dining ☐ Jazz/Folk music
☐ Pubs ☐ Classical music
☐ Sports/Keep fit ☐ Theatre/Arts
☐ Politics/History ☐ Watching TV
☐ Reading ☐ Smoking
☐ Travelling ☐ Mixing with friends
☐ Science/Tech ☐ Children
☐ Cinema ☐ Homemaking
☐ Pets/Animals ☐ Gardening
☐ Pop music ☐ Countryside

Your Attitudes

Tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly

☐ I prefer town life
☐ I involve myself in community activities
☐ I have many friends of my own sex
☐ I am interested in current affairs
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☐ Widowed ☐ Separated
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☐ Attractive
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The New CD-ROM business directory which is so powerful the powerful already want it banned

Called UK-Info Power, it is another first from the company which put 55 million Britons on a single CD-ROM Disk. And the new disk is causing just as much furore as the first one. To the outrage of the privacy lobby is now added the cries of protest from the business institutions. In the latest instance, I-CD Publishing has yet again, it seems, done the unthinkable: *it has made public the names and addresses of company directors.* Only the Archbishop of Canterbury has yet to condemn it from the pulpit.

So, as you might expect, UK-Info Power is already selling like hot cakes.

The charges against it are so predictable that I-CD could have written the script for all those who headed hot-foot to denounce it on radio, or who fumed about it to the press.

Dangerous. A licence for anarchists. An incitement to assault, rape, kidnapping, harrassment, siege, and an insidious threat to the continued existence of the British Empire *(shurely shome mistake? – Ed.)* Well, perhaps not that, but you get the message. The point is, IT SHOULD BE BANNED.

OK, so it gives the names and home addresses of 3.8 million company directors. And because it has a state-of-the-art map you can actually pinpoint where they live, and the best way to get there. And true, if their company just fobs off complaints, and indulges in very dodgy dealing, they just might now get a telephone call at home, or find some enraged customer banging on their front door.

But oddly that isn't why people are buying it. They want it because it provides desktop information on the whole British business community – turnover, profits, business addresses, directors, employees and associations between one company and another (which may otherwise not be clearly identifiable).

So – surprise – it is companies which are buying it. In any case, at £229.95 it is not exactly an impulse purchase for someone with a £50 grudge.

For companies – and there are 2.7 million on the disk – UK-Info Power does what on-line fails to do. It cuts out costly, time-consuming and frequently fruitless searches on the Internet. It also removes the drudge of sending someone down to Companies House to look it all up and waste half-a-day doing so.

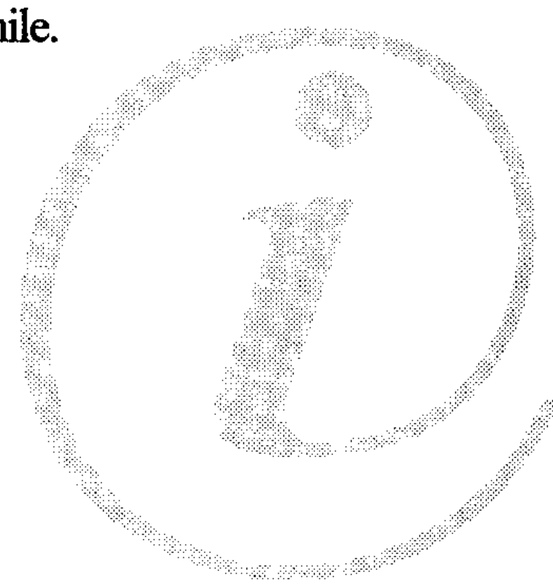
Moreover, it helps root out the shady, the cowboys, the fly-by-nights, and the people they would never want to do business with. For the rip-off merchant, in short, there is now no hiding place.

Otherwise it's good news. UK-Info Power (whisper it) is *business friendly.*

And after all, if that wasn't so what would be the point of it? Nobody would buy it – except, of course, a handful of nutters. And there are just not enough of them to make it worthwhile.

They may be mad.

We aren't.



To get this power disk call now on our Sales Hotline

08000 192 192

Sales Hotline — i-CD Publishing (UK)Ltd

UK-Info Power - Business CD ROM Edition

Gnome

I WOULD like to congratulate myself on being the lucky winner of one of the Government's new mobile phone franchises. Gnomophone offered a well researched £200 billion bribe *(Surely "bid"? E.S.)* to operate its new generation mobile phone system, the Gnomophone multi-purpose digital one-to-one net-integrated digital *(You've done that bit. E.S.)* Gnomophone NBG 2000.

This incredible piece of technology, already being used in Japan, offers the subscriber unrivalled services, including:

- global encrypted e-mail
- instant webnet surf access
- satellite TV download capability
- automatic "I'm on the train" voice-mail facility
- brain scanner to assess level of cancer damage caused by mobile phone radiation.

These are exciting times for everyone living in range of our deadly 500 ft masts — one of which will soon be erected in a garden near you.

E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
Just-passing-Didcot-Parkway
Be-home-in-5-minutes
Love you too
Bye.

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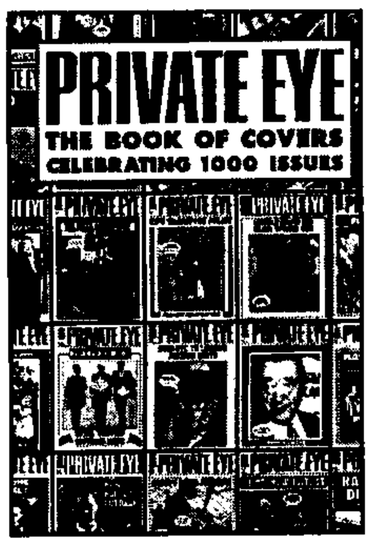

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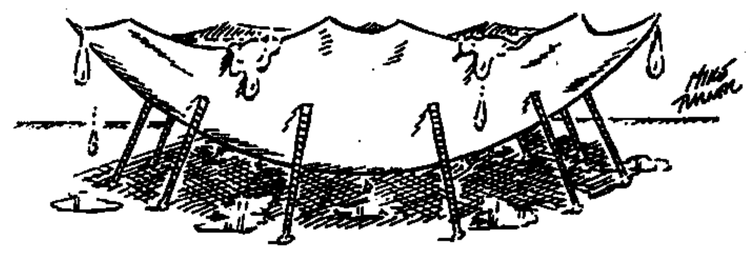

Christening Font for Baby Blair

FRANK DOBSON was quick to deny the *Mail on Sunday*'s front-page allegation that he is preparing to write a book – "an explosive account of how he was the victim of a 'poisonous' campaign by Downing Street to force him to run as London mayor".

At 10 Downing Street, however, the denial has not been believed. One detail in particular convinced Blair's apparatchiks of the story's verisimilitude: that Dobbo has already chosen a title for his memoirs, *With Advantage*.

As the *Mail* explained: "It is taken from Shakespeare's *Henry V* in which the king warns that while he fights the French, he must guard against the Scots, 'who will make road upon us with all advantages'."

(The *Mail* failed to notice a rather more resonant use of the same phrase elsewhere in the play, during the eve-of-Agincourt speech: "Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,/But he'll remember with advantages/What feats he did that day." In his memoirs, presumably Dobbo intends to strip his sleeve and show his scars, and say "these wounds I had on Crispin's day.")

Though the general public may be unaware of it, Dobbo's old colleagues know that he is indeed a massive Shakespeare buff; and that his favourite film of all time is Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*. Hence their conviction that the *Mail on Sunday* story is correct.

EXPERTS were quick to comment last week on the survey of 3,000 specimens of human tissue, none of which showed the presence of Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease (CJD), the human version of mad cow disease.

One such expert was Professor John Collinge, a member of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) and head of the neurogenetic department at Imperial College, London. He said that despite the findings announced by the department of health it was still possible that hundreds of thousands of people are incubating the disease.

Prof Collinge's pessimistic outlook is entirely unrelated to the fact that since 1997 his department has received nearly £6m in government grants for research into CJD.

WHY was the "journey zone" of the millennium dome closed on Sunday 16 April and for most of the next day?

The New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC), it emerges, has admitted there was an "incident" in which a woman and her husband were injured and taken to Greenwich hospital for treatment, and a number of other people were hurt.

Insiders say the "incident" involved a massive tablet depicting a Trojan relief, which fell on an unsuspecting party of eight. They thought it was part of the show until it landed on top of them.

It has been suggested that the tablet was left hanging from just a couple of nails after the journey zone was rushed to completion in time for the press launch hosted by zone sponsors Ford on 21 December 1999.

A LITTLE-noticed constituent of the Phoenix consortium which is seeking to take over Rover from BMW is the Mayflower Corporation, whose best-known director is John Major, the former prime minister who recently announced that he is standing down from parliamentary politics at the next election.

Major has been strangely silent, however, in the endless public discussions about Rover; as has his new (if rather distant) business partner at Mayflower, the Stagecoach group of companies, headed by well-known monopolist Brian Souter.

UNPRECEDENTED clamour for seats in the high court follows news of a pending contempt of court action involving the country's leading solicitor-advocate, Anthony Julius.

Julius was involved in a celebrated double divorce action when he left his wife to marry the daughter of a distinguished client. The contempt proceedings arise from an agreement said to have been made by the parties to the current Mrs Julius's divorce, in which both sides agreed not to discuss details of the case with any third party.

Needless to say the person with whom one of the parties is alleged to have discussed the case in breach of this agreement is a rabbi. The case obviously involves issues of unparalleled legal significance, which is no doubt why the services of Britain's leading civil liberties barrister Geoffrey Robertson QC have been retained.

THERE appears to be an ulterior motive behind the normally foul-mouthed Alastair Campbell's polite new demeanour.

The charm offensive of the prime minister's press secretary recently extended to inviting all the hacks he usually despises to a virtually unheard of evening reception. A felicitous Campbell even ensured spouses were invited too.

However, film-maker Michael Cockerell and his "fly on the wall" BBC crew were also there to film the proceedings. And slowly it dawned on the dozy hacks that not only was their truculent questioning of the ever-so-helpful Mr Campbell already on film, but so now was footage of them greedily guzzling at his trough.

The wily Campbell is convinced that he can spin Cockerell into producing a snow job of a film to rival even that of the sickly two-parter on the Dear Leader, depicting Campbell glowingly and the lobby far less so.

MISCHIEVOUS foreign office types have been briefing off the record about Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe's current anger at Britain.

The FO men have decided that the real culprit is not the helpless foreign secretary Robin Cook or the impotent diplomatic corps, but none other than Peter Tatchell, the gay activist whose condemnation of Mugabe's homophobia has made the homicidal tyrant even madder than ever.

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- *Diplomacy: Why Brenda was not amused* 9
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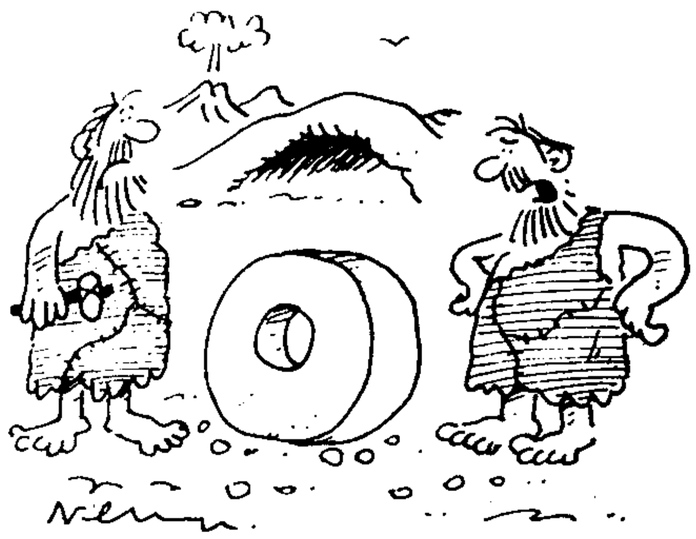
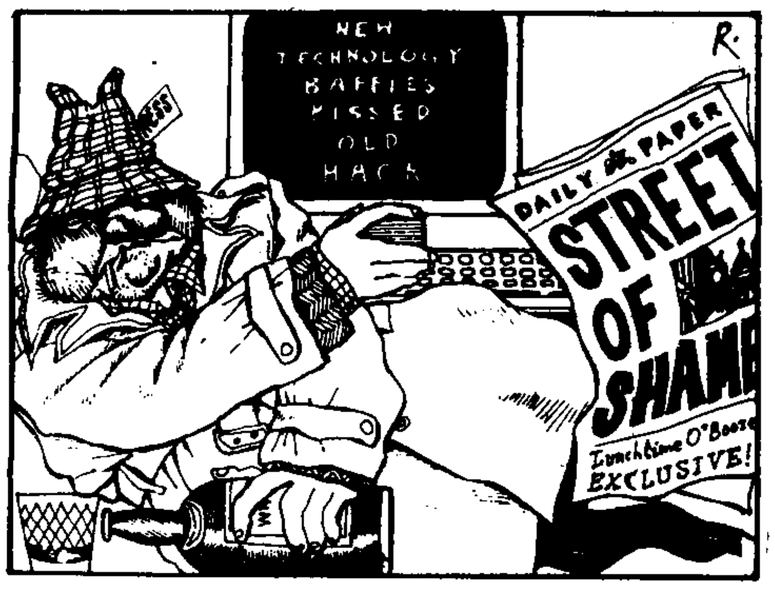


"You've invented the redundancy"



MUCH gnashing of teeth at the *Grauniad* following Steven "Nozzer" Norris's recent lunch at Farringdon Road.

During a vexed editorial meeting, support for the Tory's London mayoral candidate came from, among others, Hugo Young and Malcolm Dean, with editor Alan Rusbridger making supportive noises.

All had been impressed by his declared devotion to gay and race equality. But their enthusiasm was dampened as "Nausea" persisted in telling anyone who would listen that he was also in favour of capital punishment and against abortion.

While *Grauniad* founder CP Scott span in his grave, elsewhere in the building *Observer* staff were preparing an editorial advising readers that "It is Ken – just." "Just" presumably because editor Roger Alton has been telling everyone he will be voting for the debauched Malcolm Maclaren.

THERE is at least one tycoon who has nothing to fear from the hard-hitting investigative techniques of Tom Rubython, founder of the Fantasy School of Business Journalism and now editor of the glossy *EuroBusiness*.

Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone must be particularly delighted with the May issue, for which Rubython despatched a photographer to take several pages of *Hello!*-style snaps of grinning celebs at the Australian Grand Prix.

Other main features in the same issue include a piece about Michael Schumacher's new retailing operation which "could transform sales of motor-racing merchandise", and a sycophantic four-page "exclusive interview" with yet another Formula One bigwig, Tom Walkinshaw. Oh, and on page 16 there's a quote from Bernie Ecclestone attacking Tony Blair's "third-rate behaviour" in exposing the tycoon's £1m donation to the Labour party.

Innocent readers might almost begin to wonder if *EuroBusiness* is some kind of official puff-sheet devoted to the promotion of Formula One. And by an amazing coincidence, the magazine's main financial backer is, er, Bernie Ecclestone.

AS THE *Mirror* share scandal rumbles on, Piers "Moron" Morgan is hellbent on revenge – especially against Conal Walsh, the young hack who has covered the Slickers affair for *Sunday Business*.

Walsh first incurred Moron's wrath by doorstepping the editor at his London house on successive Saturday mornings. Fearless as ever, Piers cowered in a back room and got his wife to say "no comment" on the intercom. His PR flunkeys then rang *Sunday Business* editor Jeff Randall, begging him to call Walsh off. And, to Piers's great displeasure, the incident was then reported in the *Eye* and elsewhere.

Fortified by Dutch courage at the recent British Press Awards, Moron squared up to Walsh with a battery of death threats, four-letter words and two-fingered gestures. "You'd better make sure that everyone you've ever known is clean," he slurred. "Cause if they're not, I'm gonna find out about it!"

This absurd threat is, apparently, being carried out. *Mirror* hacks are now busily "investigating" Walsh – though at 24 years old and with little career history he can't have much to hide. Meanwhile Morgan seems to think that his preposterous East End gangster act is convincing. On hearing that *Sunday Business* media editor Dawn Hayes was leaving the paper, he sent her a sarcastic email "looking forward to returning various favours, not least in the direction of your soon-to-be-departed colleagues". Hayes, rather puzzled, asked which of her colleagues was departing. "Conal might be departing from life generally," he replied.

WHO says the *News of the Screws* has no decent exclusives these days?

Certainly not rival rag the *People*, where news desk hacks have maintained the highest standards of journalism by paying a News International freelancer to pass on details to them of what is appearing in the early editions of the *Screws*.

Paul Hooper, a freelancer from Kent working Saturday night shifts on the *Sunday Times* newsdesk, was confronted with evidence that he had been leaking *Screws* stories to the Trinity Mirror tabloid. He confessed that he had indeed sold on three exclusives.

These concerned the Buckingham Palace cook who boasted she could poison the queen; the lurid tale of Chris Evans and a vice girl; and Barbara Windsor's wedding.

THE *News of the Screws*'s Scottish section has been forced to print a grovelling apology to television presenter Hazel Irvine over claims about her private life. The cause was a ludicrous piece of fantasy dreamed up by eccentric editor Jules "Lurch" Stenson and published against the advice of senior hacks.

Stenson's behaviour since being booted out of Wapping and told to hop over Hadrian's Wall has left the *Screws* the laughing stock of Scotland. His first brainwave was to run a "Kick Out English Soccer" campaign, demanding an end to TV programmes featuring teams from England. "They will regret serving up this tedium," Stenson thundered. "Viewers do not want their schedules cleared for English clubs. Chelsea may have London viewers drooling but up here Jeremy Beadle is more popular."

Brushing aside the doubts of his colleagues, "Lurch" even devoted a leader-column to his rantings. Staff were therefore surprised to see him tearing round the office not long afterwards on the eve of a vital Champions League game involving, er, Chelsea, his favourite team. "Why aren't Chelsea on the telly?" he wailed. The campaign was then quietly dropped.

Stenson's cock-ups are legion. One involved spending £700 of Rupert's cash booking a table at the wrong press awards lunch; another the slagging off of production staff for allegedly omitting pages from the Scottish edition – until Stenson discovered that four pages had simply fallen out and were lying on his large feet. On another occasion, staff were baffled by his demand that they "stretch out" stories by the inclusion of "big wordy things". Subsequent investigation revealed he meant crossheads.

"FREETHINKERS welcome" boasts the *Grauniad*'s promotional slogan. Well, up to a point, Lord Rusbridger. If the freethinking involved concerns the *Guardian* itself, folk start to get nervous in Farringdon Road.

A group of anonymous *Grauniad* readers are putting together a book, out this summer, called *Reading the Guardian* for Verso Books, described by one as "an affectionate but quite critical look at the paper". The contributors do not, alas, include "Régis Debray, Tariq Ali, Perry Anderson and other well-heeled members of the *New Left Review* set", as suggested in a hopelessly inaccurate piece by stand-in *Grauniad* diarist Richard Adams, but are much more low-profile — "sort of media studies meets Outraged of Ealing" one tells the *Eye*. Nor do any work at 119 Farringdon Road.

After Verso's catalogue appeared, publisher Colin Robinson was approached by a Rusbridger minion to discuss possible serialisation of the book. He has promised to send Rubbisher, who is said to be decidedly edgy about the project, a manuscript.

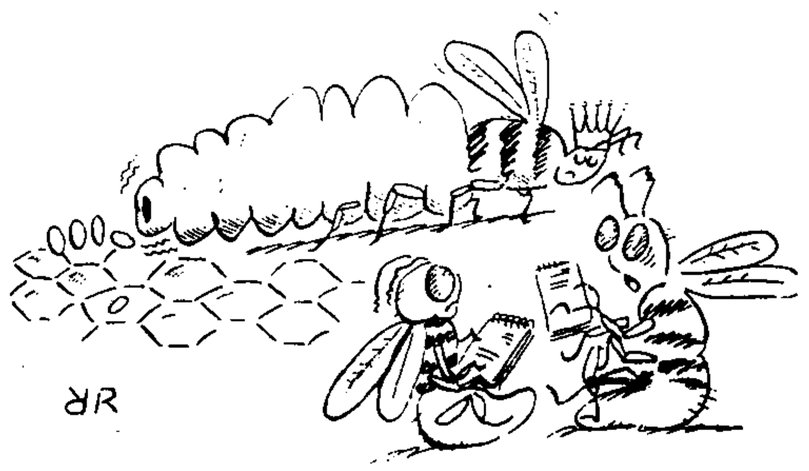
Meanwhile Verso placed an ad in the *Eye* (see page 32) and had planned to put one in the *Guardian* to encourage more readers to air their views. It begins: "Are you a loyal but disgruntled *Guardian* reader? What do you find maddening about the paper and what do you love about it? Is the *Guardian* still a radical independent voice or is it dumbed-down just like the rest of the broadsheets?" etc etc. The *Grauniad*'s advertising department had to think for several hours before turning down the ad on the grounds that "the *Guardian* cannot be seen to support anything that is seen as critical of its product". Which might make a handy epigraph for the book itself.

FOR some reason the *Times* has not yet published a letter from a member of the Reform Club following its diary revelation that she had invited the historian David Irving to a private dinner at the club just days after he was branded a racist by a high court judge.

Lady Michele Renouf, who invited both Irving and Count Nicholai Tolstoy to the economic and current affairs club dinner, defends her decision to invite "these two distinguished, incorruptible, controversially-maligned historians" to sit with her at the top table.

She reassures anxious Reform Club members that Irving is "intellectually upfront, socially refined and not an anti-semite". Rather, he is "an Old Testament race-seperatist [sic], (like his legal detractors), but then departs from them because of his N.T-revised moral aversion to political, economic and theological race-supremacy".

In other words, the perfect dinner guest.



"Being Royal Correspondent isn't all it's cracked up to be!"

HACKS Martin Bright of the *Observer* and Toby Harnden of the *Telegraph*, who in separate cases are under legal pressure to reveal journalistic source material, are not the only ones who must hope that a recent appeal court ruling is a good omen.

The *Eye*'s old friend Benjy "the bin man" Pell might also be cheered by the court of appeal's overruling of a high court judgment that ordered *Express* hackette Rachel Baird to reveal her sources (see *Eye* 997). For the principle at stake affects Pell's chosen profession too.

The order overturned by Lords Woolf, Pill and May was made on 3 March by Mr Justice Morland, who ruled that Ms Baird should reveal the source or sources of confidential legal documents she had obtained concerning a forthcoming high court action involving Sir Elton John.

Mr Justice Morland said at the time that the person who had originally come by these documents was "likely to be on the look-out for other confidential matter" for pecuniary gain.

As the retrieval of confidential legal documents from dustbins in return for wads of money is a Pell speciality, he must be tremendously relieved that the legal protection granted to the journalist also extends to the guttersnipe.

THE feuding tabloid pop-hacks were in fine form at the recent Capital Radio Awards lunch, held at the Lancaster Hotel in London.

While the *Sun*'s Dominic Mohan was sipping champagne at the front of the room with Robbie Williams, George Michael, Martine McCutcheon, Tom Jones and the Corrs as a guest of record label BMG, the wretched Matthew Wright of the *Mirror* found himself relegated to a corner at the back of the room reserved for "ordinary" people and non-celeb guests.

Noticing his arch-rival pavilioned in splendour on a top table, Wright furiously warned Capital Radio lackeys that if they didn't remove Mohan within five minutes he would leave the building in protest. "Well, you'd better go then," a PR-woman murmured unsympathetically.

Wright duly stormed out and headed for a pub round the corner to drown his sorrows. Later that afternoon, having been refused readmission, he was seen standing amid crowds of teenagers outside the hotel, forlornly trying to attract the attention of pop-stars leaving the ceremony.

Oddly enough, there was not a word about the Capital awards in the next day's *Mirror*.

O·B·N

Another very sexy man who is soon to become a dad for the fourth time is Tony Blair.

EDITOR
Marie Claire

Nominated by Nikki Evans.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"VOTE GRIFFITHS", urges a leaflet posted through frontdoors in the London borough of Richmond last week. The recipients are understandably puzzled, since the chap in question – David W. Griffiths – isn't actually a candidate in the local elections.

Still, his election message is certainly eye-catching, devoted as it is to Griffiths's views on ethnic minorities. "VERMIN!!! THEY WALK AROUND AS IF THEY OWN THE FUCKIN' PLACE! SO WHY THE HELL DOESN'T SOMEONE *DO* SOMETHING ABOUT IT?" He goes on to describe the electors of Richmond as "gutless, docile, retarded, crippled, filthy, drug-sodden degenerate shit", and helpfully appends his email address at King's College, London.

Following complaints from several Richmond residents, the authorities at King's College discovered that Griffiths is indeed a "mature [sic] student" in the theology department, who claims to be the Antichrist. They are meeting this week to decide whether he ought to be disciplined for bringing the college into disrepute.

As *Eye* readers will know, Griffiths isn't exactly inconspicuous. At school he startled fellow-pupils by announcing that he was the reincarnation of Adolf Hitler. In 1995, he was expelled from the Twickenham Conservative Association after organising a public meeting at which he demanded that John Major should be sacked as leader and replaced by, er, David William Griffiths.

His attempt to stand as an independent Antichrist in the 1997 general election was thwarted when the Post Office refused to deliver his election address, which was "deemed to be obscene". Last year the chairman of London Mensa (supposedly the society for people of high intelligence) had to "apologise unreservedly" for somehow failing to notice that a poem by Griffiths in *London Mensa News* was a eulogy to the Nazi death camps (see *Eye* 986).

"It is true we are currently working under a revised timetable. 'Permanently cancelled' does not mean the service has been withdrawn for good, but that it is out of service until further notice.

Connex announcement in Streatham Guardian

"White is the new black"

HACKWATCH

Criminal Sentences

AFTER the trial of Tony Martin, Fleet Street's appeal court went into immediate session. Its deliberations had all the ingredients of a classic courtroom drama:

Pleas In Mitigation

"Fred Barras did not deserve to be shot... He was 16 years old; and his end, in a squalid thieving expedition, was a tragic waste of a young life. But..."

— *Daily Mail* editorial, 20 April

"I am not saying that those of us under assault should all buy guns and shoot to kill. But..."

— Christopher Hudson, *Evening Standard*, 20 April

"The British people are FURIOUS. They are SEETHING. They understand that [Tony] Martin is far from perfect, but..."

— *Sun* editorial, 21 April

"Fred Barras was just 16 years old... His killer is emphatically no kind of hero, even to those who feel queasy about his conviction for murder. But..."

— *Daily Mail* editorial, 22 April

"The people... do not necessarily support Martin. They do not necessarily think it was wrong to jail him. But..."

— *Sun* editorial, 22 April

"No one wants every burglary to end in bloody violence. This newspaper stands firmly for law and order. But..."

— *News of the World* editorial, 23 April

"Tony Martin is no hero. But..."

— Roger Scruton, *Sunday Times*, 23 April

"Tony Martin is no hero. But..."

— Tony Parsons, *Mirror*, 24 April

"Vigilantes have no place in a civilised society. But..."

— William Hague, the *Sun*, 26 April

"Tony Martin is no hero. A 16-year-old boy lies dead because of what he did. Yet..."

— *Daily Mail* editorial, 27 April

Previous Convictions

On 20 April, the *Daily Mail* noted that Tony Martin's uncle was a founder of the National Front, "though there is no suggestion [Martin] ever had any sympathy for his political leanings." Of course not: even if Martin did say that "Hitler had the right idea about gypsies" and told fellow-farmers that he'd like to round up all the local gypsies and machine-gun them.

"The prosecution tried to present Martin as a lawless individual," the *Mail* continued, "citing public meetings when he had supposedly expressed aggressive views about burglars." Er, but Martin *was* a lawless individual, who fired a shotgun at his brother's window after a family argument in 1987, and had his gun licence revoked in 1994 when he shot at a man who had been scrumping apples in his orchard. Nor was there any "supposedly" about his views on criminals. At a public meeting last year, six months before killing Barras, he said the best way of dealing with burglars was to "shoot the bastards".

Suggestio Falsi

On 22 April a front-page story in the *Daily Mail* claimed that "at least half" the residents in Martin's village of Emneth Hungate had been "blighted by crime". On page 5, however, we learned what the *Mail*'s intrepid hacks actually found when they interviewed the locals. "Some were too afraid to speak out. But of the 27 who were prepared to talk, no fewer than 13 said they had been victims of crime." Which, in a village with a population of 200, isn't "at least half". The 13 atrocities included "grass cutters stolen from tenant in 1998. Police not informed... Stone garden ornaments taken from outside front door. Police not informed... Tricycle stolen from garage in 1995. Never recovered... Last April, garden shed broken into..."

This shocking catalogue was enough to provoke an apocalyptic editorial: "In cottages and remote farmhouses everywhere, the vulnerable, the elderly and people of even modest wealth live in a state of constant apprehension." The same day's *Telegraph*, with admirable lack of hyperbole, said that British country-dwellers feel "like Zimbabwean landowners: under siege from criminals".

It was not until a week after Tony Martin's conviction that the *Grauniad* bothered to report a few salient facts: according to the British Crime Survey, only 15 percent of country-dwellers are "very worried" about burglary, as against 32 per cent in cities; and even in allegedly lawless Norfolk (now described by tabloids as "the Wild East") there were 11.3 burglaries per 1000 population last year, compared with 19.5 nationally.

Expert Witnesses

"Like Tony Martin, we live at the bottom of a narrow country track, well off the main road," Quentin Letts wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* on 21 April. Although Letts hasn't actually been burgled, he nevertheless felt qualified to hold forth about "lock-pickers and window-jemmiers and the assorted thugs who fester and multiply in today's rural Britain". Why, only the other day he saw a gang of drunken yobs enter an off-licence: "They were swinging evil pieces of wood and started to wreck the place." And where was this appalling example of rural crime? Er, "near Westminster".

Repeat Offenders

Kirsty McLeod, a recent refugee from London to Kent, filled two pages of the *Daily Mail* on 22 April with a "haunting description" of how burglars had nicked some of her furniture, including a grandfather clock. "Looking out at the seemingly peaceful Kent countryside, I can hardly believe this is happening here in Britain..."

A remarkably similar piece appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on 10 March this year, written by freelance hack Christopher Hudson – who just happens to be Kirsty McLeod's husband. Hudson wrote a follow-up in the *Telegraph* on 28 March, revealing that some of his stolen furniture had been recovered. On 20 April he dashed off 1,000 words for the *Evening Standard* ("Christopher Hudson, who was a victim of increasingly bold burglars at his mid-Kent home, explains why there is widespread public sympathy for Tony Martin"). Six days later there was yet another why-oh-why piece for the *Standard*'s leader-page. "It is hard to overstate the anger and frustration suffered by people who lose the lovingly collected possessions of a lifetime to burglars... Christopher Hudson, who has suffered the experience lately, writes today on this page..."

Hudson and his wife have now written no fewer than five times about their burglary, and collected several thousand pounds from the *Telegraph*, *Mail* and *Evening Standard*. Daylight robbery or what?

HACKWATCHERWATCH

ALEXANDER CHANCELLOR, the *Daily Telegraph*'s lively young media pundit, was on top form in his column of 22 April analysing British press coverage of the Zimbabwe crisis.

Even in right-wing newspapers, he noted, "there is a striking absence of 'kith and kin' emotionalism... The white Zimbabweans, widely seen before independence as our blood brothers, are now portrayed as no less African than their black compatriots."

How very true. Here, for instance, is Stephen Glover in the *Daily Mail* of 4 April: "Above all, remember that there are 20,000 British citizens in Zimbabwe, and many others whom we regard as kith and kin." Eight days later, his colleague Simon Heffer claimed that all true Brits would be outraged by "photographs of our kith and kin battered and bleeding". On 21 April, only a day before Chancellor's thoughful commentary, a *Mail* leader thundered angrily about the foreign office's "marked reluctance to stand up for our kith and kin", while Boris Johnson demanded to know "how long we can sit idly by while our kith and kin – our flesh and blood – are brutally turfed out of their farms by Mugabe."

Johnson's piece appeared in, er, the *Daily Telegraph*. Can it be that Chancellor doesn't even read his own newspaper?

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Advertisement

IN THE TEAROOM

CAN you think of 10 uses for a used mayoral candidate? Answers on a postcard, please, to 10 Downing Street.

Now that the balls-up phase of Labour's London mayoral campaign is over, it's time for the damage limitation to begin. One of the toughest choices Tony Blair faces is what to do with poor old Dobbo.

Perhaps the least edifying sight in the whole campaign came in the last week with Labour's official candidate desperately laying into Steve Norris in a scramble for second preferences and – most pathetic of all – accusing the Green candidate Darren Johnson of "extremism" for wanting to hike the price of corporate car parking.

Meanwhile some serious covering of ass is in progress to make sure no one can quite pin down who got the government into this hole to start with. Over at the Millbank HQ Margaret Macdonagh has pieces of paper in every relevant file that can testify to how the party apparatus remained professional, above-board and strictly neutral throughout the whole candidate selection process and coolly efficient during the campaign, respecting, when appropriate, Dobbo's own wish they should maintain a discreet distance.

In the Number 10 press office there is no evidence whatsoever of any smear campaign designed to push Dobbo into leaving his old job as health secretary to stand for mayor. Not one tape recording of any press officer, never mind Alastair Campbell, saying Dobbo was a clapped-out old has-been who'd be sacked in the reshuffle anyway. Not one memo or e-mail record. And as for Anji Hunter, Jonathan Powell and the inner circle – sure they discussed the "Ken problem" in a consider-the-upside-consider-the-downside sort of way. But was any one of them responsible for this fiasco? Of course not.

No, everyone is agreed there's no point in trying to apportion blame. At times like this it's important to move on. Look to the future not the past. So what about Dobbo? Two theories are currently in play. One is to brand him a useless, embittered failure. That way, if he does go off the rails and start denouncing important people, no one will pay much attention to what he says. And it shouldn't take too much to persuade him to crawl under a stone and die a quiet political death. The other option is to reward him. Give him a plum cabinet job or something big and campaigning to do with party organisation ahead of the election. No regrets. Principled fellow. Hero of the hour. All that stuff.

Then there's what to do about Ken Livingstone – trips to the high court over the tube: demands for more money; guerilla warfare right through to polling day. Here there's really only one option. Step forward John Prescott. When Ken goes to court it will be Prescott glowering at him from the treasury counsel's bench. When Ken asks for money, it will be Big John who tells him to take a running jump. Livingstone vs Prescott: Blair wins either way. Neat, isn't it? There's only one problem with this plan – its provenance. It was dreamed up by the same useless apparatchiks who got us into this fine mess in the first place.

'Urquhart'

MEANWHILE Ken Livingstone himself has been preparing to savour his victory over Downing Street – not to mention over Millbank, the parliamentary Labour party, most of his Left Labour MP colleagues – including the beast of Bolsover, Dennis Skinner – plus the union barons and assorted hacks who have all denounced him.

The great victim has once again become the people's hero. And if he wins, he will have done so without a party machine and without any serious campaigning. No wonder the PM is looking a little peaky.

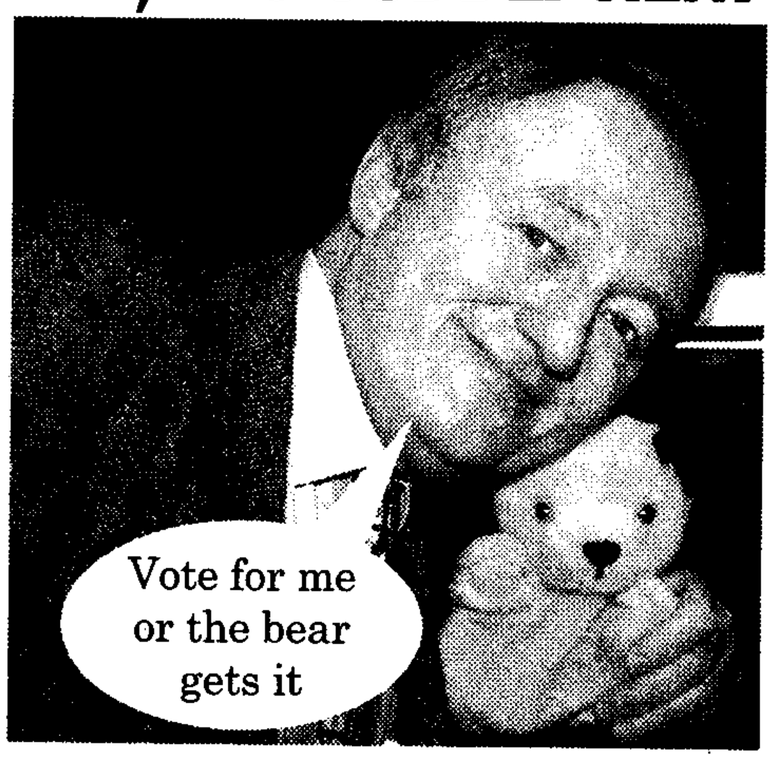
In reality of course "Mayor" Leninspart is likely to find his hands tied over the partial sell-off of the tube and many of his other ambitions thwarted by the size of his budget. Depending on the strength of other parties on the new Greater London Assembly, he may have few political allies.

Having denounced most of the "new" Labour hopefuls as second raters, the new mayor can't count on much support from that quarter either. Which is why the all-powerful executive will be key to the success of his glorious Second Coming – sorry, at his serious stab at running London. Close friends of Herman Ousely, former chair of the racial equality commission, note that their former boss is taking a great deal of interest in London affairs of late. Could he, they wonder, be Ken's choice for the all-powerful chief executive position?

HAVING drummed himself out of the Labour party, "Red Ken" is already hoping for an early return to the party, it seems, having taught the "Millbank cheats" a lesson.

Whether Tony Blair would welcome him back is a moot point, but Livingstone allies are already pointing to the Dear Leader's recent trip to Wales where he apologised to the Taffia for blocking Rhodri Morgan's selection as party leader last year. Though they believe it could take another two years before he is welcomed back into a party whose leadership so obviously loathes him, this is not stopping assorted lefties flooding local parties and unions with "Ken must return" motions.

YES, IT'S CUDDLY KEN!



FRANK DOBSON's campaign to become mayor of London has bowled some people over — literally in the case of Douglas Strand, a cab controller from Southwark.

Strand was amused when he arrived home to his basement flat on Southwark Bridge Road on Easter Sunday, with his partner and baby boy, to see Dobbo's campaign literature sticking out of letter boxes up and down the street.

He was less amused when, carrying the baby's buggy down the steps to his flat, he failed to notice a pile of the aforesaid leaflets on the steps and slipped and fell, hurting his already injured back.

It seems the former health minister is now a health hazard.

ORDER OF THE BROWN NOSE

A SMALL number of MPs have signed an early-day motion from Colchester Liberal Democrat Bob Russell.

The text of his EDM? That "this house congratulates the satirical magazine *Private Eye* on its 1,000th issue".

Labour Harry Barnes; Michael Clapham; Tony Colman; Frank Cook; Jeremy Corbyn; Tom Cox; John Cummings; Ian Gibson; Norman A Godman; Brian Iddon; Lynne Jones; Ashok Kumar; Andrew Love; Paul Marsden; John McDonnell; Linda Perham; Syd Rapson; Brian Sedgemore; David Taylor and Derek Wyatt.

Liberal Democrats Norman Baker; Vincent Cable; Ronnie Fearn; Andrew George; Mike Hancock; and Paul Tyler.

Plaid Cymru Simon Thomas.

Tories None.

> Responding to Tatchell's call for the election of Independent candidates who will shake up London politics and get things done, Mr Phillips said: "Peter is right. It is good to have (in the London Assembly) those people who are rebellious and kick and scream."
>
> *Peter Tatchell election address*

IT IS likely to be a dodgy summer in Ireland with the peace process still looking stalled.

And this is not going to be helped in the least by the recent spineless decision of Tony's good friends Bill and Hillary Clinton to cancel their planned trip to Ulster later this month.

Since it hadn't been officially announced, the Clintons can easily duck out of the visit which, one of those involved in planning publicity stunts for the adoring world media tells the *Eye*, would have included the usual meetings with quango chairmen and celtic-type musicians. And of course it would also have included the poor blind girl from Omagh who is now routinely and cynically wheeled out for this sort of thing.

A particular highlight would have been Hillary's numerous posed photo-ops with passing "community" leaders specially contrived for the electorate back home (New York, rather than Arkansas). Instead the Clintons will stay away and leave Tony Blair to take the heat. A statement vaguely condemning renewed violence will eventually appear from the White House sometime over the summer, but it will be worded in a sufficiently ambiguous way so as not to annoy Hillary's new-found Irish-American best friends.

Once again the "special relationship" means Blair gets dumped on.

AS local laments are prepared for the closure of the Ford plant at Dagenham in east London, an intriguing selection contest is underway to replace retiring MP Judith Church in a seat whose loyalties to Labour will be sorely tested by the Ford pull-out.

With attention focused on the manoeuvrings of three local councillors, the real activity is taking place elsewhere. In the red corner is parliamentary hopeful and veteran activist Teresa Pearce; in the pinkish corner is Jon Cruddas, reputedly the only official in Downing Street whom the unions trust.

The local electorate comprises a much-diminished brigade of Labour party members and a host of union branches, many of them moribund. Two of the most powerful unions are expected to swing branch votes behind Cruddas. Yet a closer examination of union-affiliated branches – whom candidates must contact for support – reveals that the GMB Barking branch, its Barking & Dagenham branch, the Silvertown Sugarworkers and the GMB South East & Grays, are all administered by one Tom Gretrex, a union official based at the GMB's regional office in Hendon. Still further inspection of the seven branches of the AEEU union reveals that each is administered by another union official – Tom Watson, based in the AEEU's HQ in Bromley, Kent. A case of one union official, all the bleedin' votes.

NOOKS and CORNERS

COMPUTER buff Derek Wyatt, MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey, can hardly hope to retain his seat or slender Labour majority at the next election. But he has shown in his short time at Westminster how easy it is for MPs to get hospitality from a wide variety of sponsors.

Mr Wyatt's register of interests for last year shows, too, that he enjoys big sporting occasions, especially if someone else is paying for the tickets. June was a good month for him. He was taken to the world cup cricket contest between Zimbabwe and Australia by the English Cricket Club and by the French firm Vivendi to the match between Australia and Pakistan. He was taken to Wimbledon by IMG and courtesy of the All-England Tennis Club too.

In August an organisation called Sport England paid for tickets and lunch for Mr and Mrs Wyatt at the Grand Prix Athletics at Crystal Palace. In September he and his son were guests of the Nationwide building society at the England v Luxembourg football match at Wembley. In October there were for Mr Wyatt no fewer than three freebies: to the rugby world cup (England v New Zealand; England v Italy; New Zealand v France), tickets and lunch provided by Ford, Thames Water and Ladbrokes. In November he made it to the world cup rugby final, again as a guest of Ford, and also to the England v Scotland soccer match at Wembley – courtesy of Firefly who even paid for the MPs dinner. In December the Wyatt family got four free tickets to see *Fantasia* at the Albert Hall, and on new year's eve four more tickets for the dome, paid for by the dome. Oh, and by the way. Mr Wyatt has a company which he calls Fair Play.

WHILE members of the UK Independence Party defect en masse, the party can at least boast of having attracted one new candidate.

Garry Rankin-Moore, a prominent Hampshire Lib Dem who has sat on Test Valley council for 10 years, has resigned from his party to stand for UKIP in a forthcoming by-election.

Alarmed by the Lib Dems' support for the European union's moves towards "a European superstate", he wrote a personal letter to his former party leader Charles Kennedy explaining why he had resigned. Back came a reply signed by Kennedy thanking him for his "letter about Britain's place in Europe", and continuing with several paragraphs extolling the virtues of the EU.

Clearly whoever wrote Kennedy's reply had not read Cllr Rankin-Moore's letter but had simply clicked on the party's standard word-processor reply to anyone who writes in about the EU. Shortly after Kennedy's letter arrived, a Lib Dem party political broadcast ended on the full-screen slogan "Charles Kennedy – A Leader Who Listens".

DIPLOMACY NEWS

THE Queen was distinctly unamused at having to hand round the Earl Grey and cucumber sandwiches when Russia's new president popped in to Windsor Castle.

Although Brenda's animosity to the descendants of those who killed off so many of her royal relatives isn't as strong as it was, she did have better things to do than hang around waiting to meet Tony Blair's new best friend. Such as having an invite to a rather swell party in Copenhagen.

Queen Margrethe of Denmark, Brenda's cousin, was 60 two days before Vladimir Putin's day-trip to London and celebrated with a big bash at the Amelienborg Palace. Margrethe had given Brenda and Phil their invites when she was over on a state visit earlier this year, and the plan was for the Queen to spend a leisurely time in Copenhagen recovering from her long trip to Australia. But Putin's visit put paid to all that so Brenda, 74, unwilling to fly to Copenhagen for just a few hours, stayed at home leaving Philip to make her apologies.

GUY STANLEY, a British author who spends much of his time in Japan, where his novels, published until now by Simon & Schüster, are set, thought the British embassy in Tokyo would be the perfect venue to launch his latest thriller, *Tokyo: Nuclear Nightmare*.

Stanley's first work to be brought out straight into Japanese is about a British government minister involved in a project to import suspect Japanese equipment for a new nuclear waste processing plant in England. The launch party (in a venue that has also played host to the great British writer Jeffrey Archer) was due to be held on 15 March.

Invitations were sent out, the menu agreed and a list of guests submitted for security. Just one week beforehand, however, a problem suddenly emerged. Apparently the embassy was not happy with the idea that copies of the book would be sold at the launch. Stanley called the embassy and was told: "Of course, we do not usually hold parties like this." It was explained to him that the embassy could only support functions that would help British exports. Stanley argued that his royalties could come into this category and pointed out that his book was being published in Japanese.

It is surely coincidence that in the same week it was revealed in the British press that British Nuclear Fuels pays the foreign office £500,000 a year to place its own man, Tom McLaughlan, in the British embassy in Tokyo as atomic energy counsellor, to negotiate nuclear trade deals with the Japanese government.

'Backbiter'

"Sorry, kids... we can't keep you any more; you're completely unprofitable"

IS THE retention of VAT on repairs to historic buildings confirms, "new" Labour hates anything old. Liverpool now provides another example. The Blue Coat School in Wavertree is a jolly Edwardian Baroque building designed by Briggs, Wolstenholme & Thornely. Pevsner described it as "spectacular" and "rousing"; it is listed grade II*.

As is so often the case with institutional buildings, the school is run down. Ofsted reported that the disrepair was unacceptable, and the department for education and employment (DfEE) offered some £7m for refurbishment.

So far, so good. But now the government has suddenly changed its mind and told the school trustees that the money cannot be spent on renovation and that a new building is "best value". And this new building, yet to be designed, is not to be in Wavertree but Kensington, a "special priority area".

This will doom the magnificent listed buildings to an uncertain and possibly destructive future. Of course the Blue Coat School has already moved once — from its charming early Georgian building in the city centre — but that was to secure more space. So why won't the DfEE repair the existing school?

The arguments offered are clearly rubbish: that a new building is cheaper and that the existing buildings are "incapable of delivering the national curriculum" even though this (state) school has topped the government's league tables in Liverpool in recent years.

As the Edwardian buildings are clearly performing the task for which they were designed, their sin must be their age — and beauty. The implications of this are frightening: that hundreds of other old school buildings — listed and unlisted — will be judged insufficiently flexible to deliver the national curriculum and be abandoned.

Curiously this unimaginative and destructive policy may be the final triumph of Mrs Thatcher who, when a disastrous minister of education not preoccupied by closing grammar schools and abolishing free milk, pronounced that it was a scandal that half the nation's children went to school in Victorian buildings. Did it not occur to her that they were perhaps the fortunate ones? Does it not now occur to Labour that there might be cultural value in fine, well-built old school buildings — giving pupils something of the advantages possessed by, say, Eton or Winchester? Evidently not.

***MY PICTURE** shows not a redundant school but a redundant Scottish baronial pile, Overtoun House, which has the misfortune to be in the care of West Dumbartonshire council. As the story of the malevolent neglect of the Victorian Gothic old Dumbarton Burgh Hall has already shown (Eye 849), West Dumbarton council is conspicuous for its casual philistinism even by the high standards of the West of Scotland Labour party. And now another victim is being prepared.*

Overtoun House was built in 1869-63 for James White, a successful chemical manufacturer from Rutherglen. White's architect was James Smith, a competent designer, but the splendid interiors at Overtoun were designed by James Moyr Smith (no relation), an important designer in the Aesthetic Movement. Overtoun House is now listed, grade "A" — but that does not protect it from the incompetent vagaries of local government.

In 1939 Overtoun House and its grounds were bequeathed to Dumbarton "in trust in perpetuity for behoof of the whole community" with the town councillors as trustees. But as ever the council did not know what to do with the gift. For a while it served as a maternity hospital; since 1970 the house has mostly stood empty and, of course, neglected, although it was used for the film of Pat Barker's novel, **Regeneration.**

Local authorities are often short of money to run what they ought to be running. But West Dumbartonshire has not displayed the slightest initiative despite various ideas for making use of Overtoun.

Now West Dumbartonshire council has resolved to withdraw security guards and board up the windows and doors to protect Overtoun House. We all know what follows next: vandalism, further decay, perhaps an unfortunate fire and — hey presto! — no more call on public funds to maintain a listed millstone. After that some nice new houses can be built on the site.

'Piloti'

DOING THE ROUNDS

What no drugs (again)?

IN FEBRUARY the *Eye* exposed the dilemma facing cancer specialists in Bristol about whether to tell patients about new drugs that might help them but cannot be afforded on the NHS budget.

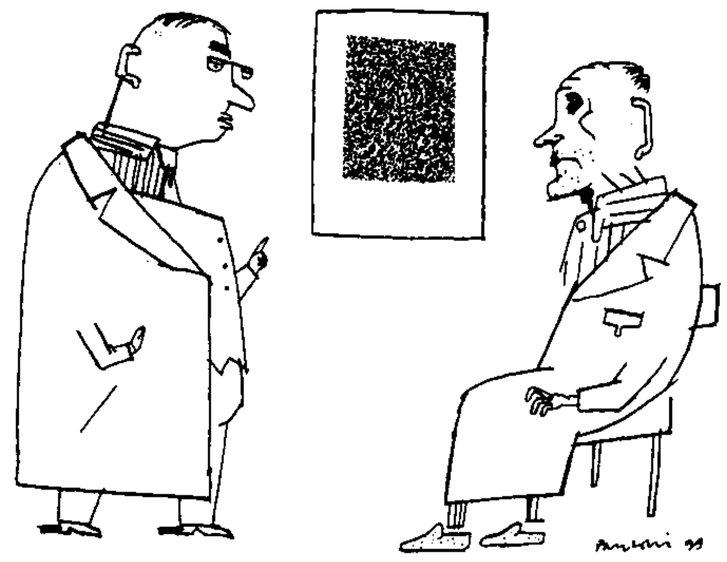
Some doctors don't mention them, some mention them in the hope that the patient can raise the money to pay for them privately; and some advise patients to write to their MP, as if that'll make you live longer.

On 11 April Professor Gordon McVie, director-general of the Cancer Research Campaign, decided to give Avon health authority a good kicking on the *Today* programme, describing it as "disgraceful" and "guilty of hiding behind the lack of evidence". Alas, McVie is wide of the mark here. If Avon health authority is guilty of anything, it is honesty, having admitted to the media that it just doesn't have the money to allow specialists to prescribe expensive drugs such as Docetaxel for advanced breast cancer.

Most other health authorities hide behind the excuse that "it's up to individual doctors to decide what drugs they use", knowing full well they can't use the drugs they want to. The situation is not helped by press reports, repeated on the BBC website, that Docetaxel is freely available in Somerset. In fact residents of both Somerset and Avon can only get the drug on the NHS if they agree to take part in a clinical trial, which could mean they end up with a placebo.

Avon's openness about rationing at least means patients should be deprived of new drugs in a fair way. The ovarian cancer drug Paclitaxel has been used in Avon since 1998 but, as Dr Angela Raffle, a consultant in public health medicine, puts it: "It would be misleading to say Avon has found sufficient new money to fully meet the costs of this." In the last three years, the funding to the Bristol Oncology Centre has increased by £1.65m, but "this is not sufficient to keep up with the increase in numbers of patients and the costs of new chemotherapy agents." McVie can rant about Avon on Radio 4, but perhaps the debate would be better served if he popped down to Bristol and told them in person where to magic the money from.

Meanwhile at Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham Mental Health NHS Trust, patients with dementia have been denied two new drugs for Alzheimer's disease. A consultant who wishes to remain anonymous said: "They don't cure Alzheimer's but they do reverse symptoms in many cases and do keep people out of institutional care and in the care of their families for longer. Until March, the health authority (Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith) decided not to increase the drug budget to take account of the need for the new drugs, so consultants who used them would deprive colleagues of the funding for equally important treatments. They are unmoved by the potentially huge savings in residential care costs. Residential care is paid for by social services and is not their concern."



"You've got a brave fight against cancer"

"In the next door authority (Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster) people with Alzheimer's disease have a chance of temporary remission to say goodbye to their families, make a will or take a holiday or two. Here in Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith we psychiatrists just tell people there's nothing we can do. Like the oncologists and the ovarian cancer treatment we each have to decide whether to say that something can be done but someone is too tight-fisted to let us do it."

After much pressure from the doctors, the health authority has now proposed that the anti-dementia drugs can be used but on condition that a nurse screens the patients for suitability before prescription and for evidence of improvement afterwards. And they will only pay half the cost of the drugs, with the trust expected to find the other half out of (non) existing funds. This is clearly an improvement, but not by much.

The government hopes all this controversy will vanish when the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) kicks in and tells us all what's worth prescribing and what isn't. However, its early judgements suggest it will err on the side of caution and demand that new drugs have more extensive testing "in the field" before being widely and fairly available on the NHS. Those lucky enough to live near a hospital carrying out a clinical trial might get a new drug – and those who don't, won't. Just another form of postcode rationing, then.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on vandalism

THE fragmented and normally bickering rail industry appeared momentarily united last month when the companies that replaced British Rail launched a publicity campaign to deter trespassing and vandalism.

Though they have all come to realise that bored youths pose a threat to profits as well as safety, the customary selfishness lurked behind the scenes.

BR's programme against trespass and vandalism, which began in the early 1990s, was producing its first noticeable results when the private franchisees took over and Railtrack was privatised. As none of those companies was officially responsible for tackling the problem, BR's budget of more than £3m a year for such action evaporated. It wasn't long before the health and safety executive (HSE) began voicing concerns about the worsening problem of vandalism and the growing number of children killed trespassing on the railways.

The rail companies are not ashamed to acknowledge the problem because it can divert attention from their other deficiencies. But when they launched their posters and TV ads last month somehow they forgot to mention that many train operators have removed staff from stations – an open invitation for delinquent youths to move in.

In Merseyside, Railtrack has been asked repeatedly to put up industrial steel-spike fencing between electrified lines and adjacent public land and footpaths. Steel fencing is provided in many places but Railtrack repairs other sections with garden-grade wire mesh – a feeble challenge to the local yobbery whose favourite pastimes include throwing metal objects on to the 750V "third rail" electricity conductor to make sparks fly. Electrocution by third rail accounts for the second highest number of public deaths on the railway (the highest being people hit by trains).

BR saw education as a key element of its anti-trespass programme and routinely sent train drivers to lecture in schools. With the help of writer Roald Dahl, BR targeted primary schools in problem areas like Merseyside, hoping to instil new attitudes in teenagers-to-be. Those new attitudes were just kicking in when privatisation struck and the new operators hurried to cut frontline staff to the bare minimum – or less than the minimum in the case of South West Trains and several others. Now the rail industry is rediscovering the value of school visits but many operators are unable or unwilling to spare drivers. According to Railtrack safety director Rod Muttram: "There have even been suggestions from some train operating companies that they should be remunerated for releasing drivers for such work."

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE FARM

WHEN you go to McDonald's and order chips, you always insist they are pure white in colour, don't you? You do the same at Burger King and KFC too, and when you buy chips in the supermarket. You don't? Well, somebody must.

McCain Foods, the chip kings who supply the big users, recently forced one West Country grower to throw away 300 tons of chipping potatoes grown under contract, a loss of some £24,000, mainly because the "fry colour" was not white enough. (A private test produced a nice golden colour.)

Rejection is all too common. One haulier took 20 loads in a row into McCain's chipping plant near Peterborough of which only two were accepted, the other 18 being turned away.

A senior buyer for McCain says this is due to the tight specification imposed on the firm by its buyers; but McCain own-brand chips have similar standards. Figures show that less than 5 percent of loads are rejected, but that hugely underestimates the scale of the waste. A single load sent back may represent hundreds of tons in store which the grower will not bother to haul. And as McCain process ¾m tons of potatoes annually in the UK, even 5 percent means 1,500 artics, many driven from the West Country and Herefordshire to Peterborough... and back again.

The real problem is the "food fantasy" created by the likes of McDonald's and the supermarkets, that food is a consistent, sanitised, precision product like, say, plastic buckets. Since it's not, maintaining the illusion carries a huge financial cost.

Consumers barely notice because the raw materials of food are so cheap anyway; but it causes despair and ruin to farmers every day. Then there is the massive environmental cost – but that's all right because it doesn't appear in anyone's accounts.

'Gumboot

A MEGA-ROW is erupting over the closure of one of Britain's most successful medium-sized abattoirs, Mead Webber on the Welsh borders, which was handling 350,000 lambs a year.

In recent years a succession of 16 meat hygiene service (MHS) vets had found nothing wrong with the plant. But when last month they appointed a new vet, Richard Turner, who had to drive up each day from Devon, he immediately issued such a volley of nit-picking demands that the owners could see no way of staying in business. Forty-two employees were given their cards and the firm closed on 26 April, sending a shock wave round the industry.

Insiders note that Mr Turner, the MHS official whose intervention led to the plant's closure, previously worked for St Merryn Meats, the giant West Country meat firm. St Merryn is shortly to open a huge factory abattoir for lambs at Merthyr Tydfil. Naturally there is no connection between the two events, but it cannot be bad news for the new South Wales operation that its main potential competitor in the region should have closed just two months before it opens.

● **IT IS hard to convey to outsiders the scale of the disaster engulfing Britain's farming community.**

The ministry of agriculture (MAFF) recently announced figures showing that, even in the five years up to 1999, the number of people employed in farming and related activities dropped by well over a fifth to just over 400,000. Last year another 22,000 farmers left the land. The MAFFia now projects that a further 100,000 will drop out in the next five years.

What this means in practice is described by a leading agricultural surveyor who was recently called in to value a farm for sale in north Yorkshire. "I found, as is all too common," he writes, "a farming family on the verge of suicide through a combination of farming conditions and bureaucracy."

When he arrived, the retiring farmer was filling his muck spreader with that morning's milk output, now unsaleable because milk prices have dropped through the floor to the lowest in Europe. But he had just had a "stop notice" from the environment agency (EA), prohibiting him from spreading the milk on his land. His son meanwhile was busy shooting half a dozen new-born calves, also unsaleable. The corpses were having to be piled up behind a shed because the EA had also ordered that they could not be buried on the farm.

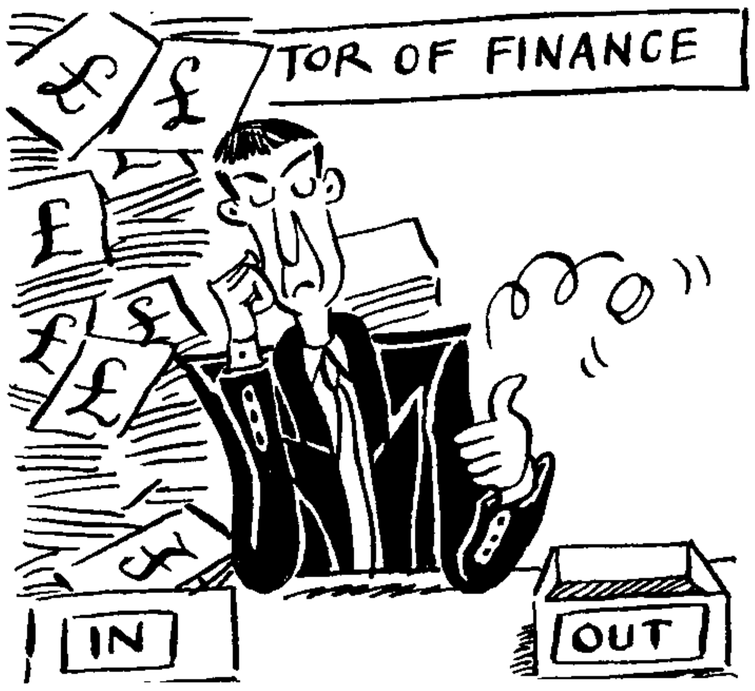
The farmer's quotas for sheep, suckler cows and milk were now virtually worthless. But even if he could find a buyer he would have to pay the MAFFia a fee of £1,000 for each transfer. When it came to selling his farm machinery, he had to have a health and safety executive (HSE) report on each item, costing £150 a time. When it came to safety certificates for his milking machinery, this represented £150 for each separate component.

During the last six months, the farmer said, he had had 42 visits from various officials. He spent half of his working week filling up dozens of forms for MAFF. Even the slightest error on a form could provoke hours of site meetings with ministry officials, backed by threats of heavy fines or even prison.

At the last moment, just when he had received a reasonable offer for his farmhouse, the local planners decided to list it. They then almost immediately served an expensive repairs notice.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS



BROWNED OFF

MOST national newspaper coverage of this week's local elections has concluded that apathetic voters are likely to stay at home in droves. The irony is that in Britain's rottenest borough, where locals are eager to turn out the gang who run what is effectively a one-party state, no election is scheduled until 2002.

Welcome to Durham, charming university and cathedral city, where Inspector Knacker is looking into yet more allegations of improper behaviour.

The latest inquiry concerns a visit to the home of city councillor Joe Anderson, a former mayor with 28 years' service, made by fellow Labour member and deputy leader Mildred Brown (*Eyes passim*).

Brown turned up on Anderson's doorstep demanding that he use his influence to get his local party to drop its insistence on a regional Labour party inquiry into allegations of racism among the comrades in Durham. Anderson's Croxdale ward members had been particularly upset at the treatment of Durham's former principal safety officer, Mac Williams, a popular Labour party member and JP, who accepted £6,500 in January on the eve of an employment tribunal which would have heard how he had suffered years of racial abuse from fellow senior council officers. On one occasion Cllr Brown herself had responded to Williams's distress with the words: "What's the matter with you, you black bastard?" (*Eye* 994).

Many party members were angry that the matter appeared to have been swept under the carpet, with no one disciplined and council taxpayers' money effectively used to buy Williams's silence.

When she visited his house Brown showed Anderson a letter containing serious but completely false allegations against him and implied that if he did not do her bidding in getting the racism inquiry stopped the letter would be widely circulated. Anderson went straight to Inspector Knacker, who is looking into the matter.

LABOUR PAINS

FOR the second time in less than a year, voters in the traditionally rock solid Labour "heartland" of Harehills in Leeds have returned a Lib Dem councillor.

Both times the defeated Labour candidate has been ex-councillor John Clare (*Eyes* 974, 977 and 999) – who even managed to lose last month's by-election despite trade and industry secretary Stephen Byers' popping in to help his campaign. (Then again, who needs Stephen Byers as a chum right now?)

But don't expect to read about the anti-Labour swing in *Leeds*, the pisspoor paper written by Leeds city council's propaganda wing (*Eye* 967), which constantly predicts bumper harvests for the self-styled Labour-run "boom city".

Not content with this — or perhaps concerned that a surprisingly large number of copies of *Leeds* seem to get lost in the delivery process — the authority also spends almost £2m a year on advertising, promoting itself and churning out press releases for a gullible local media. Last year the authority's seven-strong team of press officers sent out 700 news releases — just three of which mentioned non-Labour councillors.

AWARD WINNER

AT a local government awards ceremony in March Newham council swept the board, winning council of the year, finance team of the year, public relations team of the year and housing team of the year. Not joining the applause was one family that has suffered seven years of humiliation... courtesy of Newham council.

Marion Vidolich, 25, an epileptic and cerebral palsy sufferer, requires 24-hour care which is provided by her mother Edith, 57, and father Alfred, 67. Seven years ago the family applied to Newham for a grant to install a stairlift to make Marion's life more tolerable. Newham agreed to pay £33,533 for the work; it was left to the family to find a suitable builder.

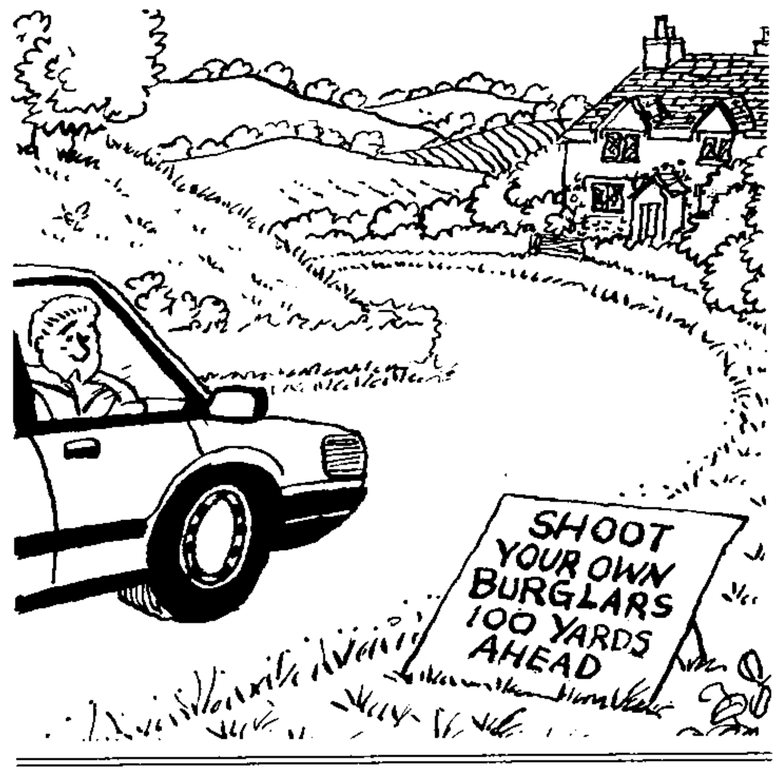
Two large, reputable building firms suggested by the family were rejected by Newham on cost grounds. A smaller operation, TDK Clements, was deemed acceptable by the grants officer.

In September 1992 Clements began work. Three weeks later David Clements demanded, and received, a payment of £10,000. When a month later he asked for a further £10,000 the Vidolichs had misgivings - but the grants officer had signed the forms and Mick Osbourn, principal building control officer, assured the family that the building work would be overseen by the council to ensure it was up to standard.

Shortly after receiving the second payment the builder disappeared — leaving the Vidolichs with no heating, no boiler, a partly constructed bathroom, a toilet that did not flush and exposed wiring. The only rear exit had been via sliding doors but thanks to the botching builders these doors no longer opened. Marion, meanwhile, has been virtually confined to her bedroom for the best part of seven years.

The Vidolichs claim the council has been negligent and are seeking compensation. The case has been dragging through the courts for years. Last September the family's legal aid was cut off. Newham has shown no urgency in seeking to resolve the situation.

A council spokesman told the *Eye*: "In 1998 Mr and Mrs Vidolich issued proceedings to sue the council for the alleged failure by building control officers to supervise the work properly... The council has always denied liability in this respect. Notwithstanding the litigation the council is acutely conscious that the needs of the family still require a permanent solution. The council will fund an appropriate disabled facilities grant scheme for Marion as soon as one can be agreed between the parties. However the council cannot undertake to



make good work... where in the council's view such a situation was caused by the Vidolich's employment of an incompetent contractor."

● ON 13 April the *Eye* emailed Labour's local government supremo Howard Knight with a simple question: could he confirm that the Labour group of West Lancashire council was required to attend a meeting with party officials at which major bollockings would be dished out, possibly followed by suspensions and expulsions from the party, because some Labour councillors had voted with the Tories to flog off the council's 8,000 properties to a yet-to-be-set-up housing association?

The following day we received a scathing reply: "Your correspondent seems completely unable to deal with reality. I'm not aware of any meeting to consider suspensions or expulsions... Because of some Labour councillors' absences from the council meeting, a Tory resolution instead of the Labour group resolution was agreed."

FACT: The following week, after a meeting with regional party officials, 10 West Lancashire Labour councillors were suspended for, in four cases, voting with the Tories or, as in the case of Cllr Frank McKenna (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*), failing to be present for the vote.

DORSET County Council
DIRECTORATE for EDUCAITON, LIBRARIES & ARTS

SIXTIES REVIVAL

HALF-WAY through his first year as Liverpool's chief executive David Henshaw is displaying an ego to match his £130,000 a year fat cat salary.

At a recent meeting with lowly city council receptionists, he emerged on to a stage to the strains of "Fanfare to the Common Man", and bathed in the flashlights of photographers there to record the historic occasion.

He then moved among the audience like a demented daytime TV host and asked the largely female staff "Hands up all those who remember the Sixties and Seventies?" Those who did were duly ordered to move to one side of the room. He told this group: "You are the past"; to the remainder he said: "You are the future." Such blatant ageism no doubt reassured long-serving staff regarding their future career prospects under the new chief.

"Out with the old, in with the new" has also been the attitude of the Liverpool Labour party, which hopes that its purge of anyone with vaguely socialist ideals will put it back in control of the town hall again.

The purge of outgoing lord mayor Joe Devaney and others has not worked, however. Instead, it has led to a situation where there have not been not enough candidates to fight all the seats, let alone revive the support of Labour's core voters.

Disputes among the comrades have even led to fisticuffs. Purged ex-councillor Paul Bostock recently thumped "new" Labour darling Cllr Oliver Martins. Unchastened by a police caution for this, Bostock described his action as "striking a blow for the working class".

LOVIS FOR LONDON – 4 May 2000 KNIFE & PACKER

THIS IS THE BIT I REALLY HATE, THANKING ALL THOSE LOYAL PARTY WORKERS WHO SLAVED ROUND THE CLOCK TO GET ME ELECTED... ...SO CLOSE...
I'M SORRY, JEZ, BUT I'M WELLING UP HERE
SOB
YES, PITY MAX QUIT AFTER THAT FIRST MORI POLL

TV

Rebus (ITV)
Crimewatch UK (BBC1)

IN an industry in which mediocrities are paid hundreds of thousands of pounds a year for running television companies not very well, a true visionary of the medium is now almost totally forgotten.

The late ITV producer Kenny McBain, who died tragically young, had the idea of adapting contemporary detective novels into glossy pseudo-movies running for two hours across the evening. Many suits of the day thought this was lunacy – the rule of the game was that drama played out for an hour each week – but the idea eventually prevailed and a series called *Inspector Morse* was edgily premiered.

The rest is plagiarism. As the *Morse* franchise began to die – the cop will be killed off in the next one-off special – ITV began to flick frantically across the shelves in the Crime section of the nearest bookshop.

The Inspector Barnaby novels of Caroline Graham were turned into a show which was really *Morse* in code. Now the books of the most talented of the younger British crime writers – the Inspector Rebus series by Ian Rankin – have inevitably been fingered to fill the big gap left by the crossword-solver.

The best you can say about **Rebus** (ITV) is that it might hopefully encourage viewers to try Rankin's excellent books. The project shows again the problems of copycat programming. Colin Dexter's *Morse* novels were ideal for TV because his plots were better than his prose and because the detective double act – Morse and Lewis – allowed lengthy dialogue exchanges in which they explained the plot to each other. None of this applies to Rankin's books, in which the strength is in his sentences and Rebus is a loner prone to interior monologues.

On television, this inevitably translates into yards of anguished voiceover, a device which almost always establishes that an adaptation has failed. Regrettably the casting made the same declaration of desperation.

Rebus, a Scot who ages from 40s to 50s across the series of novels, was played by – and for this men at ITV earn salaries in the high six figures – John Hannah. Channel 4 made an entire series about gay men – *Queer As Folk* – without employing Simon Callow; but for some reason *Four Weddings And A Funeral* has left ITV convinced that Hannah is the only Equity member equipped with a Glasgow or Edinburgh accent.

One of the most interesting aspects of Rankin's novels is the central detective's fallibility. Whereas a Morse or a Dalgleish might once have accidentally got something wrong years before, Rebus, especially late in the sequence, frequently and sometimes wilfully gets things wrong. It will be intriguing to see if television has the nerve for this – but the cowardice of the cast-list doesn't encourage optimism in this respect.

A far more dangerous application of television◊s desire for detectives always to be impressive and efficient was the **Crimewatch UK** (BBC1) edition to mark the first anniversary of the unsolved murder of the show's ex-presenter, Jill Dando. Twelve months ago – when the series was first turned in on itself by the edition which initially appealed for information on the presenter◊s death – this column made three points.

The first was that this rare instance of the series having to deal with a crime already widely publicised drew the viewer's attention to how little information detectives really had. The second was that the show's use of visual reconstructions had the effect of giving greater factual weight to what were often vague and unreliable impressions of witnesses: it was clear, for example, a year ago that very contradictory descriptions of what were possibly several different people sighted had been merged into the suspect known as "sweating man". And – finally – Nick Ross's refusal to press the investigating detective hard on how little he knew was in stark contrast to the tough interviews which representatives of other professions receive on the BBC's news programmes.

A year later these faults had expanded to become scandalous. DCI Hamish Campbell had completely changed the scope of the investigation. Sweating Man – so lovingly reconstructed on the first programme – had now vanished to be replaced by an entirely new suspect – Baggy-Clothed Man, who was now also given the instant reality of being played by an actor.

Clearly investigations shift but at no point did Ross murmur: "Hey, so Sweating Man turned out to be a false trail, eh?" In an anniversary reworking of his 1999 remarks, Campbell insisted that he was certain the perpetrator would be caught. The obvious journalistic caveats – that the killer might already have left the country or committed suicide and might never be found – went unraised by Ross.

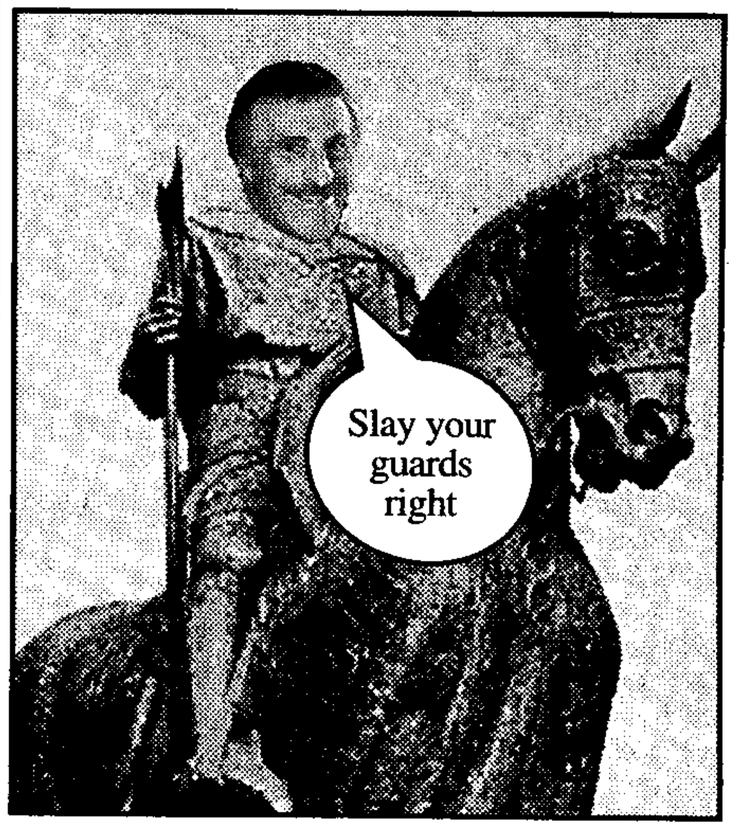
Any office in which an employee is horribly killed is going to remain in shock for a long time and so there has to be sympathy for the *Crimewatch* team about the difficulty of these programmes. But their failures over Dando are merely an extreme example of the tacit Masonic handshake with the cops which mars the whole programme.

One of the weaknesses of detective fiction – such as the Rebus stories on either page or screen – is that they have no way of dealing with the unsolved case: the conventions of the genre demand a resolution in the final scenes. But that's just a minor irritation of the form. The inability of detective fact on television – *Crimewatch UK* – to cope with unclosed files and police failures is unforgivable. If the corporation takes seriously its journalistic reputation, this corporate video for the police force posing as an analytical programme can no longer be tolerated.

'Square Eyes'

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Robert the Bruce Forsyth

JUST FANCY THAT!

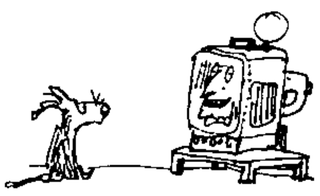
"I will not be watching *Rebus*... I will probably end up in a pub – as long as they don't show it on the TV."

— Author Ian Rankin quoted on page 25 of the Scottish edition of the Express, *26 April.*

"I'll be watching *Rebus* along with everybody else."

— Author Ian Rankin quoted on page 51 of the Scottish edition of the Express, *26 April.*

MEDIA NEWS



THE launch of London Live, the BBC's replacement for GLR, Greater London Radio, was not without its clangers – not least when presenter Alice Beer gave a "station ident" to LBC instead of the Beeb.

The biggest cock-up of all, however, was not to consult GLR listeners about the changes in the first place. The so-called South East Review that decided that GLR should go was an entirely suit-based affair which left most listeners – especially those who rather liked good old GLR – entirely out of the loop.

The results were predictable. When the BBC opened a web page for people to send in comments about the exciting new station, editor David Robey was shocked to find 300 angry complaints.

Hence the "live chat" he had scheduled to celebrate the new station on air had to be replaced with an altogether less public e-mail discussion where embarrassment could be more tactfully contained.

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW
VERY OLD ...
RATHER TATTY ...
OF NO REAL VALUE ...
AND DERIVATIVE OF OTHER STYLES...
SO WHAT DID YOU ORIGINALLY PAY FOR THEM?
£10 MILLION
BBC buys up Lloyd Webber shows
Ken Pyne

ONLY three weeks to go before the Independent Television Commission (ITC) – "as our name suggests, we're independent of the government and of the broadcasters" – is exposed as either: a) a grovelling government toady; or b) a cringing lackey of ITV bosses.

That is how long the regulator has given ITV to explain how it will reverse the collapse in news audiences following the removal of *News at Ten.* And if the ITC doesn't like what it hears, it can supposedly force ITV to restore the old ITN flagship to its traditional slot.

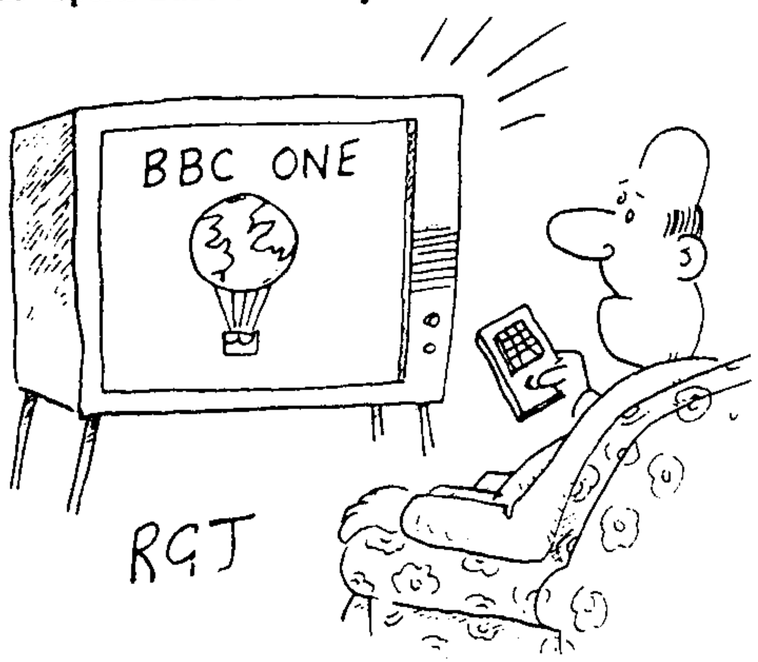
It won't, of course. ITV has seen its profits from advertising rise by £100m even as news audiences collapsed by between 13 percent and 20 percent.

SINCE it was revealed that TalkSport had faked a "live" football commentary, Kelvin Mackenzie has been busily assuring the Radio Authority that it was a one-off mistake and nothing to do with him.

This comes as a surprise to some of his colleagues at TalkSport (previously Talk Radio), who thought faking programmes was more or less company policy. Last year, for instance, the station spent some months championing the sport of motorcross, with "live" commentaries galore. In fact, every one of these bike-race commentaries came from Studio B, where a reporter would watch the Sky TV coverage (with the sound turned down, natch) and deliver an excited "on-the-spot commentary" over a looped soundtrack of motorbike noises in the background. Each week at least one motorcross anorak would ring the station to complain that the engine sounds were the wrong type for the race, but Kelvin's team carried on regardless.

Similar ruses were used with the station's pisspoor coverage of Formula One, to save the expense of sending a commentator to the more far flung races such as the Australian Grand Prix. And, before news was banished, the trick was even applied to coverage of by-elections: a minion in London would copy the results down from the TV (Sky, of course) and hand them to the presenter – who would announce that there had been "news from our reporter on the spot". It was also common practice on such occasions to get "instant reactions" from politicians who were in fact talking to Sky or even BBC News24. Only once did the station own up to the fact that it was simply, er, putting the TV on the air: during last year's Wimbledon, a presenter announced that coverage "is brought to you live via the television from Talk Radio".

Meanwhile it is no surprise to learn that Kelvin – the man who brought topless weathergirls to cable television – has now managed the impressive feat of getting semi-naked women on to the radio. How so? Visit www.talksport.co.uk and you will be greeted by the "Sports Babe of the Day".



"And next an expensive advert saying how great the BBC is, followed by a cheap programme which proves otherwise"

THE charms of the Emerald Isle have captured the heart of Mohamed Fayed, who has revealed exclusively to the Dublin *Sunday Business Post* that he plans to move Harrods Online to the Irish capital.

Chairman Mo told the paper the e-commerce arm of his 150-year-old retail empire will begin operating from an office in Fitzwilliam Square within three months. Sucking up to the hackette conducting the interview, Fayed explained his decision was inspired by the time he has spent among the "warm people" of his "beautiful... spectacular country" – approximately two days over the past 30 years.

Of course the move to the republic, which may also encompass the manufacturing of some of the store's own-label goods, has nothing to do with the cheaper rate of 10 percent corporation tax in Ireland.

SUE CLARK, the PR superwoman who worked on a takeover bid at Scottish Power up to four hours before giving birth to her first daughter, won a prestigious PR award after moving to Railtrack earlier this year.

The Liddell Thompson Award for Excellence in Communication was given her at a ceremony in March held by *Insider* business magazine at the Sheraton Hotel in Edinburgh. The award, still in its second year, is the brainchild of lobbyists Colin Liddell and Lesley Thompson — both of whom formerly worked in, er, Scottish Power's PR department.

TUC NEWS

ON THE eve of the annual conference of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union (MSF), allegations that general secretary Roger Lyons and head of finance Nelson Mendes misused union funds promise a lively industrial tribunal later this year. It could cost Lyons his job and the MSF a six-figure sum, on top of the money it has already paid in an attempt to keep the unsavoury affair quiet.

Problems for Lyons and Mendes started after Mendes' secretary Marcia Solomon told the union's then assistant general secretary John Chowcat of her concerns. Among the allegations were details of expenses claimed without receipts, unauthorised personal loans and the use of MSF money to tart up Lyons's home. Chowcat's investigation came to an abrupt end when he was offered, and accepted, a deal whereby he resigned with a pay off not unadjacent to £250,000.

With Chowcat out of the way, Lyons and Mendes sacked Solomon on the grounds of "breach of trust". An internal MSF investigation revealed that there was substance to some of the allegations made by Solomon. But the union's accountants, Fishers, produced another report which argued that sacking Lyons would not be justified. With rank and file members having been denied a say about the fate of their leader, conference censure motions were blocked after Lyons' supporters on the national executive committee argued that sacking the general secretary would only bring the union into further disrepute.

Marcia Solomon's own union, the GMB, has lodged an appeal on her behalf for unfair dismissal with an industrial tribunal to begin on 3 July. Solomon, who has a new job with the GMB, is being supported by one of the GMB's top brass, London regional secretary Paul Kenny, who is seen by many in the GMB as a likely successor to John Edmonds. Edmonds, just like Lyons, is no stranger to IT hearings, having faced the threat of one after a former secretary, Elaine Wright, accused him of bullying (*see Eye* 985).

Confident that Solomon will be vindicated and Lyons castigated at the tribunal, Kenny has advised her that sums offered by the MSF to settle her case before the hearing date should not be given consideration unless they contain a minimum of six digits.

Pseuds Corner

Oh, I have felt that intoxication of delight myself: throwing your heart over a fence in the hope that you and your horse will catch it on the far side: in the unquenchable belief that the delight is shared.

But the terrible question remains: why do we love an animal, then put it at risk? It is unanswerable: save that horsey people know the answer without words. It all makes sense: in some corner of the soul that words and logic do not quite reach.

SIMON BARNES (on the Grand National)
The Times

Dr Chris Pinney, a University College London anthropologist who lectures in material culture, has a local authority allotment where his partner grows leeks, potatoes, garlic, lettuces, broccoli, radicchio, raspberries and strawberries.

He is attracted by the charm of the vernacular. "It's the tumble-down bricolage that is utterly seductive. Bricolage in this sense of constructing from things that are ready to hand, used by Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* to describe a particular mode of thinking. One sees runner beans twisting up old cast-iron bedsteads..."

While many people working on allotments do it out of necessity and love of the soil, Pinney thinks academics feel the joy of viewing an allotment's surreal conjunctions.

"There is also pleasure to be had from feeling the fine tilth of soil running through one's fingers... It's the organicity of it, I suppose – the earthy wholesomeness – contrasted with the near sterility of professional activity."

Guardian

De Beers sees itself as something akin to Robin Hood. We persuade those people who can afford luxury goods to purchase those goods to help build schools in Africa.

ANDY LAMONT
Shewire business

The wall that separates the electricity supply station from Herzog & de Meuron's chaste galleria is thus an unbreachable barrier between old and new London, soot and Serra, energy and Emin, mechanical and digital, cockneys and mockneys, modern and postmodern.

This is not a criticism, but a feeling.

JONATHAN GLACEY (on the Tate Bankside)
Guardian

Rhonda Wilcox and David Lavery solicit your ideas, abstracts, or completed essays for an in-development book on Buffy the Vampire Slayer. The series is the intersection of many contending forces – gender, generation, culture and more. Buffy's complex and ambivalent heroism is central to a series which is itself complex both thematically and structurally. From its language to its narrative arcs, from single characters to social cohorts, from pop culture allusions to foreshadowings of Columbine, Buffy constitutes a text worthy of study and appreciation. Possible topics range from allusions and ancillary texts to vampires, women in production, and Xander.

Pillarbox, UK literary/cultural studies e-list

Well, I – as an expounding ass and patched fool for the occasion – will venture to say that what he [Bottom] had was a sexual union with Titania, but one that was no more like ordinary coitus than Mozart's *The Magic Flute* is like Jagger's 'Honky-Tonk Woman' [sic]. The point is made by Bottom's synaesthetic half-remembrance of the Bible.

CEDRIC WATTS
'Does Bottom cuckold Oberon?' in John Sutherland and Cedric Watts, *Henry V, War Criminal? and other Shakespeare Puzzles*

CONTRIBUTORS: D. Morgan, Ginny Morrow, Christine Gordon, Matthew Leys, Liz Hedgecock, Julian Thompson.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Millennium Gnome

Sir,

Although I still regard your publication with nothing but the greatest respect, I have to pour a little sour wine in the Eye 1000 celebratory punch (if you pardon the expression).

Topical it may be, but the Zimbabwe "Pick your own farm" cartoon was also rather tasteless. I trust greater control over such cartoons will be taken in the future.

Yours sincerely,
LIAM PENNINGTON,
Preston.

Sir,

I wish to be the first of many to write to you in a high moral tone cancelling my subscription after your Roy of the Reapers strip (Eye 1000). I further wish to demonstrate that I fail to recognise that this feature is really a satirical attack on the vicious hooligan bastards who perpetrate these crimes and that perhaps laughter is sometimes a way of coping with what one cannot understand. I have no sense of humour and am regularly shocked with each issue – I can't understand why I read it.

Yours loftily,
KEITH ROYALES,
Bolton.

Sir,

I am writing to complain about the inadequacy of your millennium celebrations which have been a source of great disappointment to me. I queued for several hours at Stratford to buy a copy of Eye 1000, only to find that I was in fact at a railway station rather than a newsagent.

When I did finally obtain a copy, I found that the fireworks failed to live up to the advance publicity and the entire issue just seemed like any other — instead of the once-in-a-lifetime event that was promised.

As any idiot knows, there was no Eye 0. Consequently, your actual millennium will not be until Eye 1001. I trust that this issue will be more lively and memorable than the last.

Yours faithfully,
ANDY CURTIS,
Via e-mail.

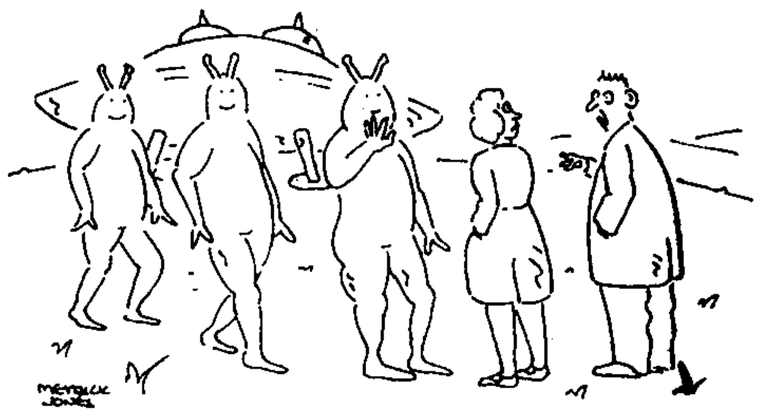
Vat man and robbing

Sir,

Regarding the criticism of the late Sir James Goldsmith and the Referendum party (Eye 1000, VAT a Patriot!) for managing, quite legally, to avoid paying VAT on advertising services. Perhaps someone ought to take the author to one side and gently explain the facts of life to them.

VAT is a Brussels imposed tax and the main source of pocket money for that wannabe world domination boys' club, the EU. So just what is unpatriotic about avoiding it?

Yours faithfully,
PETE WARMINGTON-GARDNER,
Monmouth.



"They're not intergalactic ambassadors for peace, they're bogus asylum seekers!"

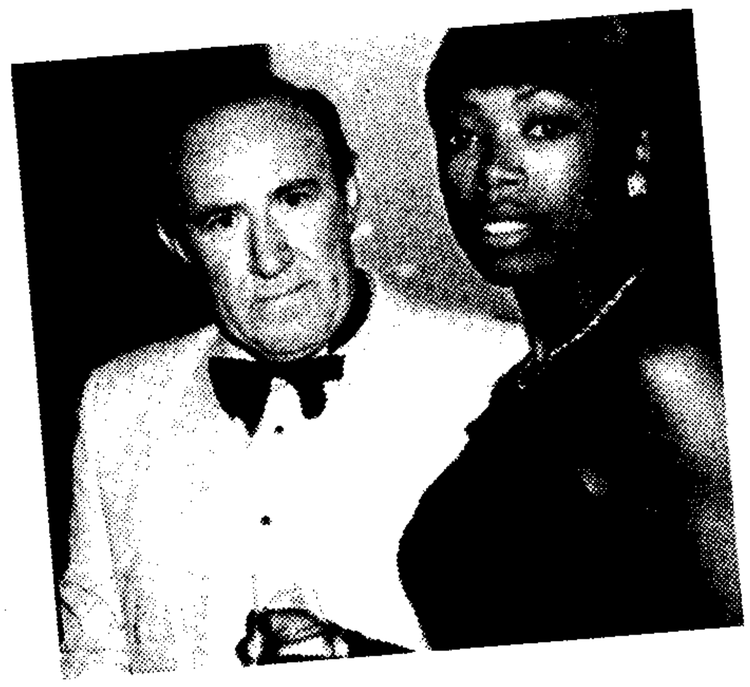
Photo opportunity

Sir,

I note that on the cover of your Commemorative Issue you have an old picture illustrating young and old, black and white, co-existing in perfect harmony.

Whilst this beautiful tableau has served you well in the past, readers may be becoming a little tired of it. I enclose a new image which I hope may be of use to you in your second thousand issues.

Yours faithfully,
FIONA McVEY,
Glasgow.



Sir,

Please congratulate Steve Bell on an excellent cover for your 1000th edition — brilliant!

Who missed John Major's peas or Square Eye's couch potato? Unfortunately my dog chewed the bit where the giant screen was so I couldn't see who was on it. Please could you reprint that part, or the original it was taken from, so I can see who it was? Thanks.

Yours,
JEREMY,
Via e-mail.

Lodging a complaint

Sir,

I enjoyed the symbolism of your Wittenberg Telegraph illustration (Eye 1000).

I am not and never have been a freemason, but some of my ex-best friends are.

Yours sincerely,
CHARLES WARDLE,
Battle, East Sussex.

Knackered knacker

Sir,

Following your rightful invective at the mountain of binding paperwork that a DSS investigator needs to have approved by assorted line managers prior to carrying out a surveillance, I presume you will extend the scope of your sympathy and outrage to the fact that the same European legislation binds us poor knackers as well.

Already burdened with a mass of bureaucracy, the new rules extend to everything from the highest level anti-terrorist or drug operations, to on the beat PCs like myself deciding to keep an eye on local bicycle thieves. At its ultimate extension, even something like keeping an eye on a local traffic black spot to tug offenders, and work towards the home office target of reducing road accidents requires the same level of authority and form filling as it can be classified as a surveillance operation.

Whilst I think that accountability is essential, especially as it seems to be the perception of the public that all police are liars (the typical solicitor seems to work on the "liar, liar, pants on fire" approach in court to play on this public perception), it is yet another way of hamstringing our effectiveness to combat crime.

Yours faithfully,
A KNACKERED JUNIOR KNACKER OF THE MET,
Via e-mail.

Mean or what?

Sir,

It has been brought to our attention that on more than one occasion you have featured in your magazine, in corrupted picture-strip form, our character Roy of the Rovers, copyright of which resides fully with Egmont Fleetway Ltd, without permission or credit.

We are ready to take legal action to protect our copyright if necessary, but would be prepared to overlook this matter of infringement for a use fee of £250 per event.

I would be grateful if you would supply full details of the number of times Roy of the Rovers has appeared, so that we can ascertain the costs to be charged.

I look forward to your response in due course.

Yours faithfully,
GIL PAGE,
Executive Editor, Egmont Fleetway Ltd.

Lookalike

Hall

Ciccione

Sir,

I'm sure all your readers will have noticed the amazing similarity between La Hall and La Ciccione. Do they share some mutual dark roots, I wonder?

Yours,
LOUIS HELLMAN,
London W3.

Channel hopping mad

Sir,

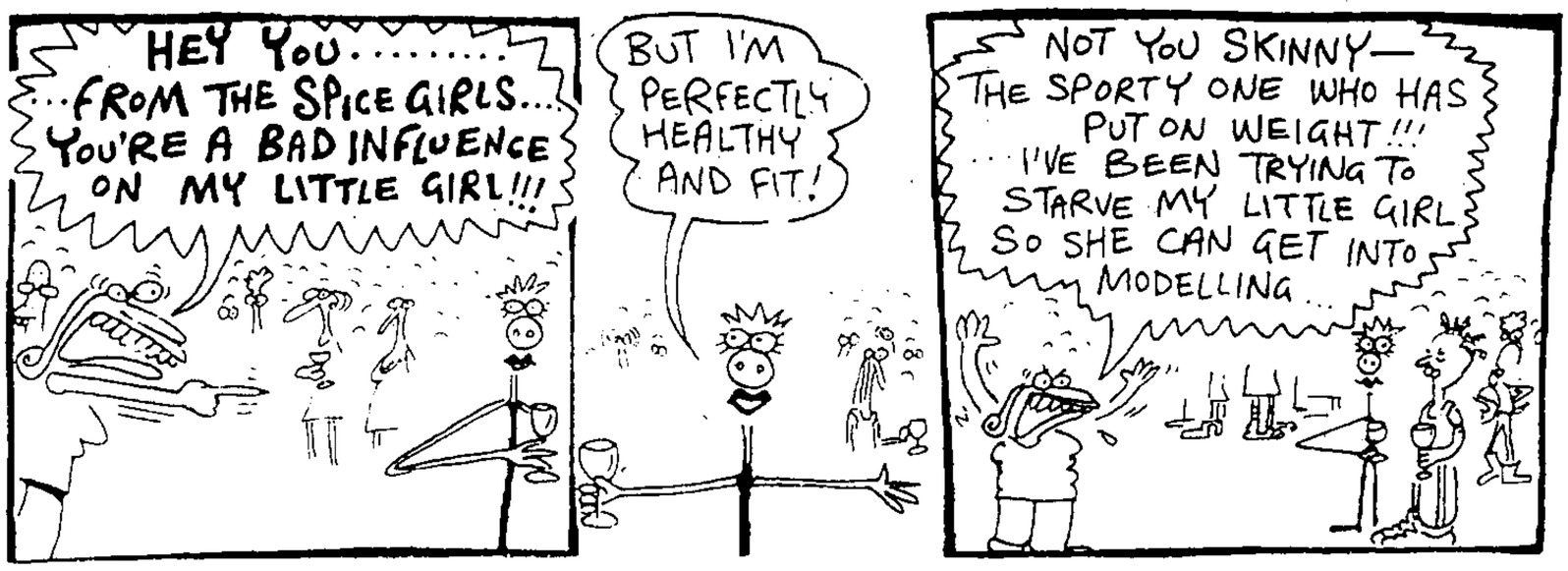
Channel 5 lurid, desperate and vulgar? Well, that's all in the eye of the beholder. As for us being blamed for ITV's failings, it makes a change from..

Yours faithfully,
DAVID ELSTEIN,
Chief Executive, Channel 5.

● ***This letter unfortunately had to be cut for reasons of boredom. Ed.***

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


HEY YOU.....
...FROM THE SPICE GIRLS....
YOU'RE A BAD INFLUENCE ON MY LITTLE GIRL!!!
BUT I'M PERFECTLY HEALTHY AND FIT!
NOT YOU SKINNY— THE SPORTY ONE WHO HAS PUT ON WEIGHT!!!
...I'VE BEEN TRYING TO STARVE MY LITTLE GIRL SO SHE CAN GET INTO MODELLING...

I-SPY *Walsall*

Submitted by Tony Gray. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

A Lawyer replies

Sir,

Geoffrey Bindman clearly cannot miss a cheap jibe at a Murdoch newspaper but his OTT rant in response to the Eye's entirely accurate piece about the extraordinary outcome in the McPhilemy libel action suggests he is getting forgetful. Has he forgotten that it was his client, McPhilemy who specialises in branding whole groups of people in Northern Ireland as "sectarian murderers"? Has he forgotten that, some seven years after the Channel 4 programme, his client jumped on the same old band wagon and published a book, "The Committee" naming names along with photos? That was in the USA because his client would have had the pants sued off him if he had published over here. Nowhere does Bindman mention this in his letter or spare a thought for the 19 innocent people called as witnesses to the fact that they were not "murderers", a rather more serious charge than anything levelled against his client.

Yours,
ALASTAIR "BLUBBER" BRETT,
(Legal Department,
Times Newspapers,
LIAM CLARKE,
(Northern Ireland Editor,
Sunday Times.

LUVVIES

"It's a brilliant script and just as we finished filming it, I burst out crying, really sobbing."

SID OWEN
(on his departure from EastEnders)
BBC News

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Dry humour

Sir,

Re: Your "Funny Old World" piece on the African propensity for "Dry Sex" (999)

I was in Zimbabwe several years ago and well remember reading about this practice in the local newspaper. It struck me that this may well explain the rapid spread of AIDS on the African continent. Also its merciful restraint in the western world.

Not quite such a funny world then?

Yours,
PETER THORNTON,
Kendal, Cumbria.

Barfe tender

Sir,

Re: Street of Shame, Issue 1000

It is lovely to know that Louis Barfe has not changed as his career has progressed. I well remember one afternoon about five years ago, while he was Lancaster University's student newspaper editor. Two of us had to physically restrain him from drunkenly taking a piss in the middle of a crowded Alexandra Square (which is rectangular). For some reason he was dressed as a Reservoir Dog.

Yours sincerely,
TIM WILLIS,

Via e-mail.

No Daily Routines...Go Nostalgic in taste at the TAJ.
"Presumptuous Dining At Unassuming budgets".
Advertisement (Japan)

Lookalike

Smith

Dobson

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the similarity between Captain Smith of Titanic fame and Frank Dobson, Labour mayoral candidate?

Yours,
TERRY GRAYSHON,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

DJ: *Who wrote Hamlet?*
Female Caller: *Er, Macbeth.*
Capital Gold
(Michael White)

"Barnsley have started off the way they mean to begin."
CHRIS KAMARA, Radio 5 Live
(Adrian Kelley)

"...from that moment the pendulum went into reverse."
GERALD SINDSTAT, BBC1
(Dick Gill)

"He says he'll walk away from the game when his legs go."
Football Commentator
(Mr G. Stansfield)

"I don't want to be either partial or impartial."
FRANK McLINTOCK, Sky Sports
(Vince McNeany)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Letter From **Mitrovica**
from Our Own Correspondent

PEACEKEEPING is often a thankless task, but here in Mitrovica some of the contradictions around the international effort in Kosovo are now so great they threaten to overwhelm those of us mandated to stand between the simmering hatred of the town's Albanian and non-Albanian citizens.

Mitrovica is the most tense and divided place in a province that remains on the edge a year after the NATO bombing raids. Elsewhere, many of Kosovo's Serb, Roma and other minorities fled during those attacks. More have left since peace was allegedly restored. But in Mitrovica, which always used to be predominantly Serb, enough stayed for it now to be the only town in the region with a sizeable non-Albanian presence.

Standing patrol on the barricaded bridge over the River Adra that divides Mitrovica is something out of vintage le Carré. Far from promoting reconciliation and reconstruction, we squaddies from the NATO-led KFOR are striving, with at best limited success, to keep apart what our political masters used to call the freedom loving pro-western Albanians, on the south bank, and the unreconstructed communist Serbians to the north.

The Serb enclave is dark and austere, with empty shops, rundown buildings and an oppressive atmosphere that contrasts sharply with the reconstruction and prosperity of the south. The Serbian flag still flies defiantly over the main square, despite the scene being enacted below, where our French colleagues flag down and search passing Serb police cars. What was meant to be a shining example of the New World Order fells more like East Berlin during the Cold War.

The idea, you may remember Tony, George (now Lord) Robinson and Jamie explaining, was to create a multi-ethnic autonomous Kosovan paradise, free from dastardly Serb intimidation and aggression. But the crusade for liberal European values has grown distinctly sour. Albanians, frankly, want the Serbs out and seem ready to settle for nothing short of full independence in an ethnically pure state.

Their aggressive tactics present us in KFOR with a problem. We came, we thought, to protect a put-upon minority from Serb aggression, only now to find that it is a Serbian minority that faces the same kind of threat. In the past 12 months around 500 Serbs have been murdered in Kosovo and more than 80 churches destroyed. As many as 200,000 non-Albanians may have been expelled. We also have become targets for frustrated militants, with our Russian and French brothers special targets for local resentment.

Our commanders fear such tensions are already spreading beyond Mitrovica to fuel Albanian passions in — and territorial claims on — Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as the Preservo Valley in Serbia. But their response seems only to be enflaming the situation still further. KFOR, for example, is ready to lend vehicles and support to the few Albanians that remain on the north bank. It has not reciprocated the gesture, however, to the Serbs stranded in the south.

If only we could give way to a more neutral international initiative. There had been high hopes last year that the UN might be able to assume responsibility for fixing some of the mess that the actions of NATO's most gung-ho leaders had created. But with the mandate of the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) due for renewal in June, there is increasing frustration at headquarters in New York over how the operation is unravelling. "We have done everything we could to prevent the Albanians from being chased from their homes," says Kofi Annan, UN secretary-general, "but now we are obliged to do our best to protect the Serbs."

UNMIK, though, has its own problems. It lacks the manpower required even to begin to police hotspots like Mitrovica. As a result it has had to call in KFOR, which is ill-equipped politically and technically for such a task, and has in the process undermined the UN's already shaky credibility. Indeed, pretty much everyone ignores Bernard Kouchner, the colourful former French humanitarian affairs minister who heads UNMIK. His own assessment, though, is as accurate as it is grim: for the moment he says, reconciliation in Kosovo "is absolutely impossible".

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

"I'm shocked and appalled that an art school should be engaging in such a blatant act of censorship," Jonathan Yegge told reporters outside the San Francisco Art Institute, "especially as the concept of my piece is hardly revolutionary. My work is an exploration of the master-slave dialectic in Hegel, and it's firmly rooted in the classical Western tradition. It's absolutely outrageous that it should have been banned."

Yegge, a forty-six-year-old mature art

student, was speaking after his project for the New Genres class at the Art Institute had been rejected by his tutors. "The idea for 'Art Piece No. 1' was simple yet devastating. I asked for a student volunteer, blindfolded him, tied his hands behind his back, and stood him in front of a camcorder. Then I had reciprocal oral sex with him, including fellatio, velching, and touches of 'blood queening.' After that, we drank each other's urine, and swapped feces, using an enema. It was pure Hegelian dialecticism — thesis, antithesis, and synthesis — but when I showed the video to my instructor, he told me that I was a pervert, and that 'Art Piece No. 1' was very bad art. Then he threw me out of his class. But before I left, I gave him a piece of my mind. My exact words to him were 'you are a damned fool.' I do not pull my punches."

A spokesman for the San Francisco Art Institute later confirmed to reporters that it had indeed banned Yegge's work. "We felt it was dangerous, both morally and medically." *(San Francisco Chronicle, 27/3/00. Spotter: Wallace Brown)*

"The Council hereby grants permission for a weekly prayer call to be sung from the mosque of the World Islamic Mission in Oslo. The prayer call, or azan, will be allowed once every Friday, at midday, and the chant of 'God is Great' must last no longer than three minutes.

"The Council also notes that a demonstration by members of the Heathen Society was held in Oslo last Saturday, protesting against the possibility that the weekly prayer call might be allowed. Therefore, in the interests of balance, permission is hereby also granted for the Heathen Society to chant 'There is no God' outside the mosque at five minutes before midday each Friday. This chant must also last no longer than three minutes.

"By order, Old Town Council, Oslo." (Norway Post, 29/3/00. Spotter: Stedman)

—

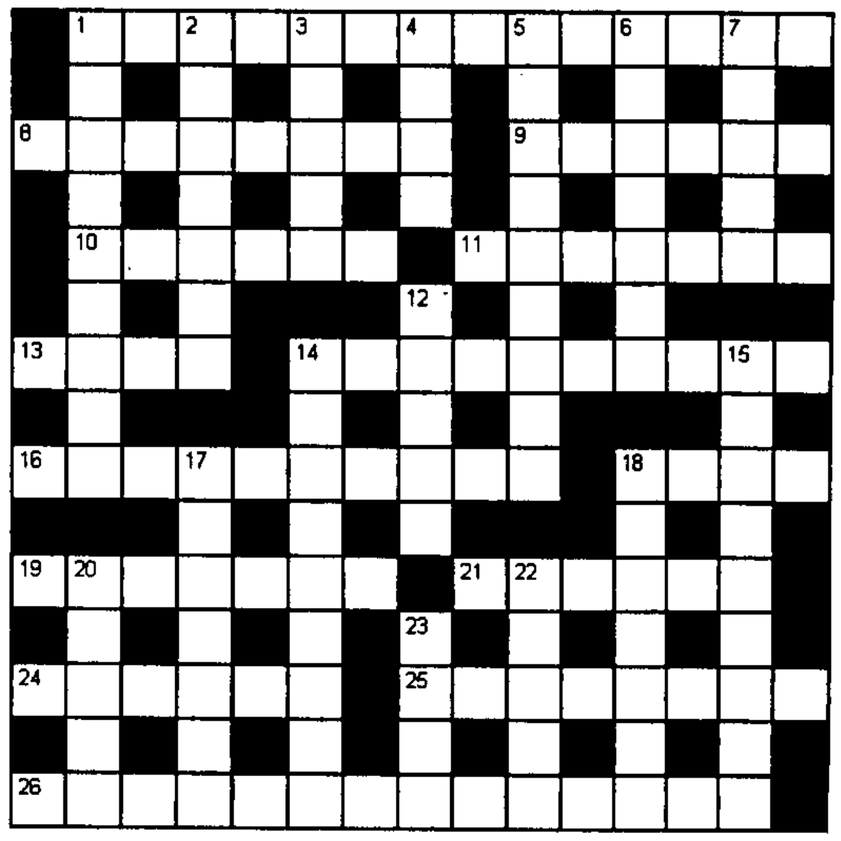
"Yes, I admit that the groceries were found inside my overcoat when store detectives searched me," Mtutuzeli Mobsma told Magistrate Ivan Munnick in court number 2 in Grahamstown (Cape Province). "But do not be deceived by appearances. I am not guilty of shoplifting. I cannot be, because my body had been abducted by foul-mouthed evil spirits at the time. They forced me to commit this offence, so it is them you should be accusing today, not me."

Thirty-six-year-old Mobsma, who was conducting his own defence, had pleaded not guilty to charges of having stolen candles, meat, ear plugs, milk chocolate, Victory V lozenges, beef stock, and twelve packets of yeast with a total value of R58.29 from Shoprite Checkers on November 5th. "This has happened to me so many times before that it no longer surprises me. When the spirits come, they swear at me and lift me up until I am floating high above the earth. From up there, I can look down and see a lot of people being hurt. Then they send me back to earth and make me steal things for them from supermarkets, mostly candles and yeast. 'We love bloody yeast' they say, 'bloody take yeast.' They cannot get enough of it. This has been happening regularly to me since 1992, when I fell on my head and split it open. That's when the spirits got in, you see. They are very small, and they squeezed in through the crack in my skull before it was stitched up."

Amid loud laughter from the public gallery, Magistrate Munnick halted the proceedings and ordered Mobsma to be sent for thirty days psychiatric evaluation. *(The Natal Witness, 8 January 2000. Spotter: Edmund Ions)*

EYE CROSSWORD 156

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/13/14 ac. Your status before fertilizer made you? No more than a blinking insert in the old man's magazine! (4,1,7,2,4,7,3)
8 Object to Amin gruesomely going round knocking off both men and women (8)
9 "One has to interrupt reign, sadly, and get back" (6)
10 Bellow about flipping part-time visionary (2,4)
11 Allow rotten toe-rag Livingstone finally inside (5,2)
13 (see 1 ac.)
14 (see 1 ac.)
16 Like Robin Cook, no minor personalities hiding euro fiasco (10)
18 'Horizontal kinetics' covers intercourse (4)
19 The chief perversion of Euro MPs (7)
21 In the fashion of one detested by Thatcher – nothing but a product of apartheid (6)
24 Magazines, etc. like *Punch* – bust without the foreign intervention (6)
25 City supporters – one has trouble on the way back (8)
26 Perhaps Scottish or Welsh constitution is a major concern of Blair and co. currently (8,6)

DOWN

1 Antihero Clive on his beach, getting end away (5,4)
2 Cap'n Bob? Not one to give you the full story (7)
3 See you make TV reporter socially acceptable (5)
4 Piss-artist – and plonker? (4)
5 Gore rents out with complete absence of self-reproach (2,7)
6 Member not so much following as pissed (7)
7 One who's thick with ex-dictator getting round Thatcher initially (5)
12 Seat that's been dumped (5)
14 Member of society complimentary to Brenda and Brian, relatively speaking (9)
15 Inclined to be gutless, like old newspaper that's had too much exposure? (9)
17 Garland after learning to be a siren (7)
18 For women who want to avoid the issue of sex? Yes and no (3,4)
20 Number less than ten, but superior to one African rebel movement (5)
22 Talk means sod all to a shit, note (5)
23 Reportedly talented but topped by Caine soundly (4)

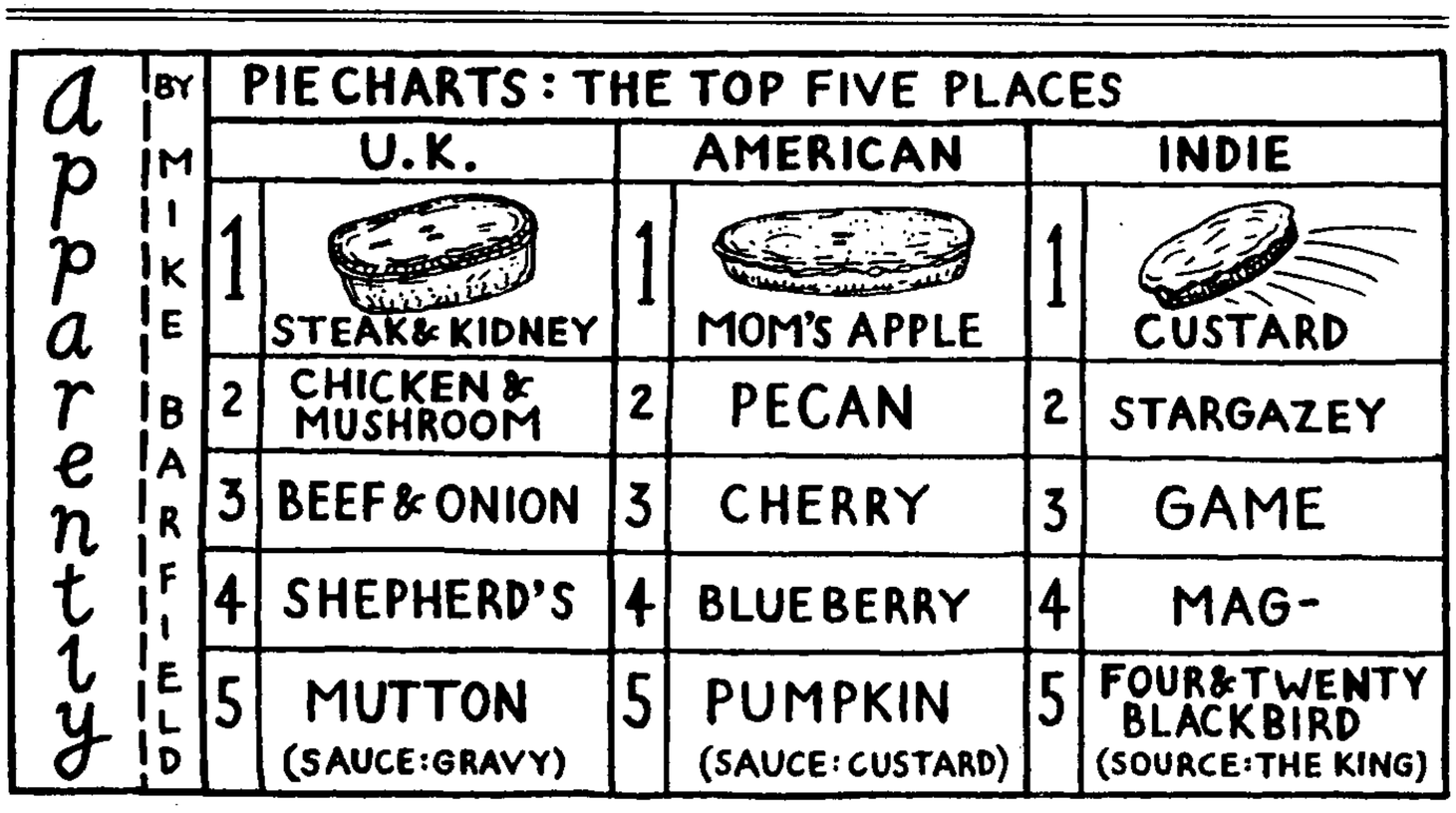
£100 prize to first solution opened on 12.5.00. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

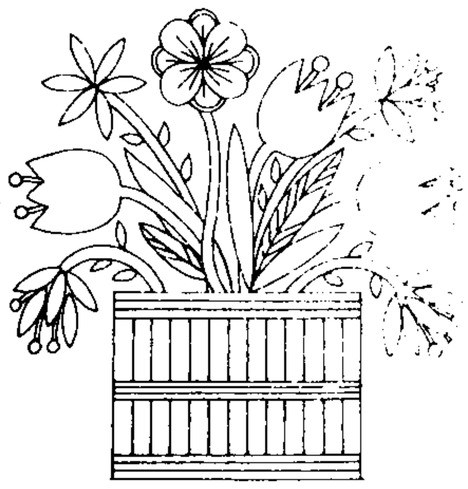
Solution to Crossword No. 155

Winner: MICHAEL TROLLOPE

ACROSS: 1/30 The Night Has a Thousand Eyes 9 Haunt 10/20 Fan dancer 11 Tynan 12 Cohabit 13 (see 14 ac.) 14/13 Looked ones age 15 New Delhi 18 Feng shui 20 (see 10) 23 Leftish 25 On the go 27 Shaft 28 Rub 29 Plonk 30 (see 1 ac.).

DOWN: 1 Touchdown 2 Entebbe 3 In fits 4 Hangover 5 Hothead 6 Santa 7 Chic 8 Inferior 14 Lifeless 16 Lecherous 17 Euphoria 19 Shiatsu 21 Autopsy 22 Gobbed 24 Flash 26 Oiks.





Guerilla Gardeners' Question Time

with Anna Kist

Caller: When is the best time of year to plant a brick through the windows of McDonalds?

Anna: Any time of the year is good, but spring is traditional. Make sure you've got a nice big brick and make a great big hole in the window. With any luck, in 6 months' time you'll see a lovely "For Sale" notice where the shop was.

Caller: Hello Anna, can you recommend the best seeds of destruction for world capitalism and the international finance system?

Anna: I suggest you grow a nice green mohican or maybe a red beard. Then strip off all your clothes and behave as if you're in the nursery. This should do the trick.

Caller: How can I help to provide more green spaces in London?

Anna: The best thing to do is to find a nice grassy area with plenty of flowers like Parliament Square and then dig it all up and put it on the road for the dustmen to throw away.

Caller: Hello, Anna, it's Tony Benn from the Flowerpot Men. Have you got any cure for madness caused by drinking too much tea?

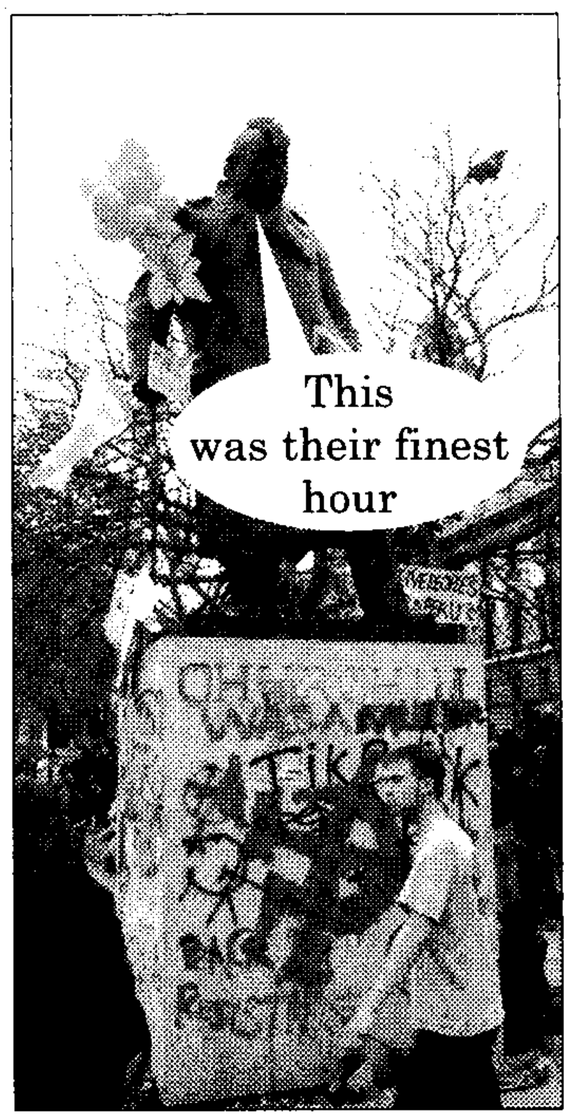
Anna: Well, you should...

Benn: I'm not listening to you because you're part of the ruling capitalist media, but I am recording this conversation because I know you will distort my views...

Dave Spart, Senior Co-Ordinator Of The Neasden Anarchists Against Burgers Collective

ONCE again, the capitalist media have cynically over-reacted in typical knee-jerk fashion to the totally and utterly peaceful violent demonstrations against international capitalism er... on May Day the so-called defacing of the Churchill statue was typically misrepresented by the right-wing press since it was actually a totally legitimate act of protest against a fascist warmonger who cold-bloodedly fought against Hitler who was er... a vegetarian who totally opposed fox-hunting and even organised demonstrations against international capitalism according to respected historian David Irving er... *(Cont'd. p. 94)*

CLASS WAR HERO



A Matter of Life and Death (U)
If you've never seen this magic Powell and Press-burger classic, I envy you.

Anne Billson, Sunday Telegraph

"They can't deliver until the end of the week"

THE QUESTION THAT STUMPED TV CAROL

by Our Media Correspondent
Hugh Wantstobeamillionaire

THE nation was gripped last night by a thrilling battle of wits between Britain's brainiest women – Carol Borderver and Kirsty Yawn.

The nail-biting competition to raise their profiles *(Surely "Money for Charity"? Ed.)* reached a sensational climax when host Chris Tarrantless asked Borderver: *What was top showbiz writer William Shakespeare's first name?*

Was it:

a) Cedric?

b) Kevin?

c) Gazza?

d) Peregrine Worsthorne?

ITV chiefs later admitted that their researchers had made the question too hard and it was no wonder that TV Carol had such problems with it.

The correct answer is of course "Macbeth".

Kirsty fared even worse and stumbled in the second round when asked: *Who are you?*

Are you:

a) Carol Smillie?

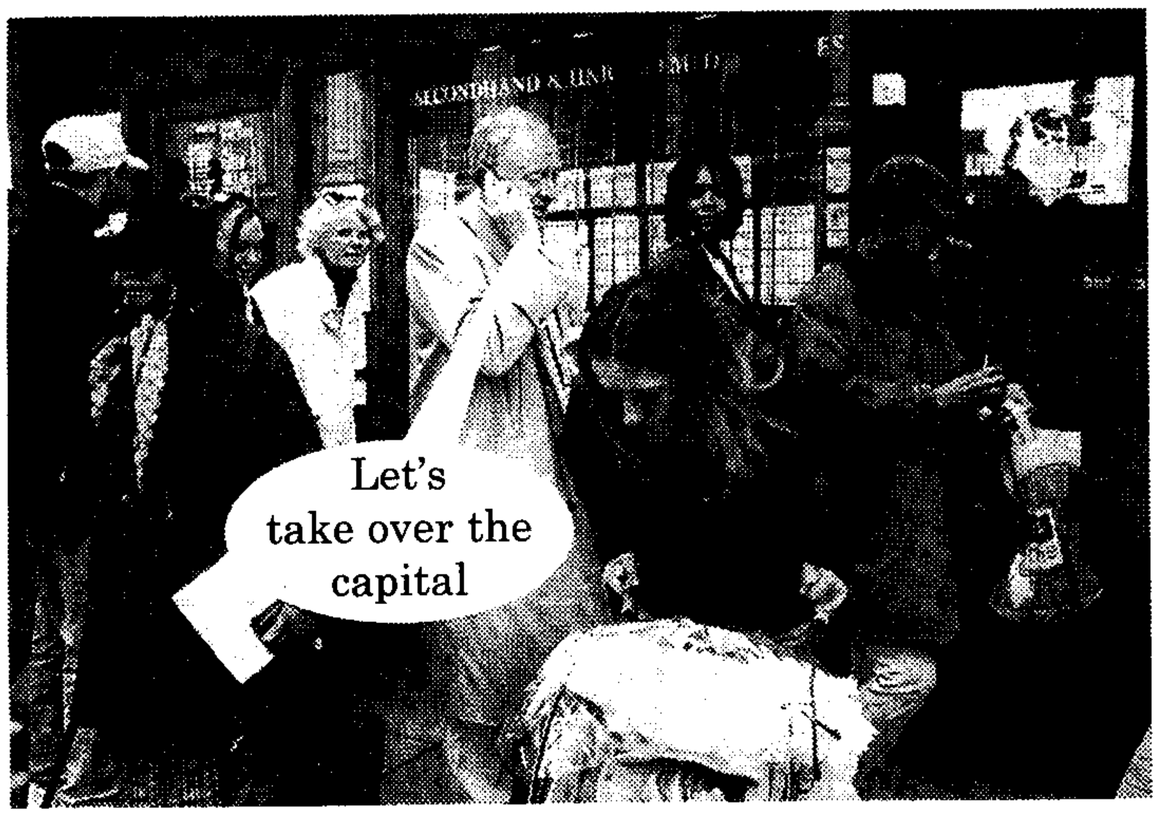
b) Kirsty Wark?

c) Mariella Frostrup?

d) Baroness Jay of Paddington?

Kirsty asked to ask the audience, 75% of whom said she was Charlie Dimmock *(Cont. p. 94)*

ANARCHIST CO-ORDINATOR IDENTIFIED



Eye Baby Poll

Who Is The Father Of TV Ulrika's Love Child?

You tell us who you think put the bun in curvy Ulrika's oven!

If you're right, you can win Frank "Dobbo" Dobson's beard (Surely "A Ford Cortina"? Ed.)

Is it:

a) The Duke of Edinburgh? (6-4)

b) Ruud van Nistelrooy? (20-1)

c) Michael Fish? (100-1)

d) Stephen Norris? (4-6 Fav.)

Non-Runner: Julian Clary

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And what a sad week it has been for all of us!

As those of you who were there will know all too well, the opening night of the pantomime was a disaster.

When Mr. Dobson came on as Mayor of London, he was literally booed off stage.

And, you know, in my heart of hearts, I couldn't really blame the audience.

I don't in any way want to be judgmental but Frank was completely useless.

He got his lines all wrong. He could not be heard at the back of the hall.

His trousers fell down in the important scene when the bells rang out to announce who would be Lord Mayor.

Even the stuffed cat was more entertaining than Frank. I don't want to go on about how bad he was, and I write this more in sorrow than in anger!

But I am very angry indeed about how badly Frank has let me down.

If he didn't want the job he should have said so when I told him he had to do it!

As it was, he didn't even try! And when the scenery fell down when he walked into it, I have to confess that I booed as loudly as everyone else!

The consequence was inevitable. When my old friend Mr. Livingstone jumped up onto the stage to take over the part, the audience quite rightly laughed and cheered.

And don't get me wrong. I cheered with the rest of them!

When Ken got up and made his little joke about this being 'one in the eye for the vicar', I was the first to join in the laughter!

Ken and I may have had our differences in the past, particularly when I excommunicated him from St. Albion's, but deep down we share the same beliefs! Ours is a broad church, and we can do business together.

My door is always open, Ken, and there is a glass of sherry waiting on the sideboard!

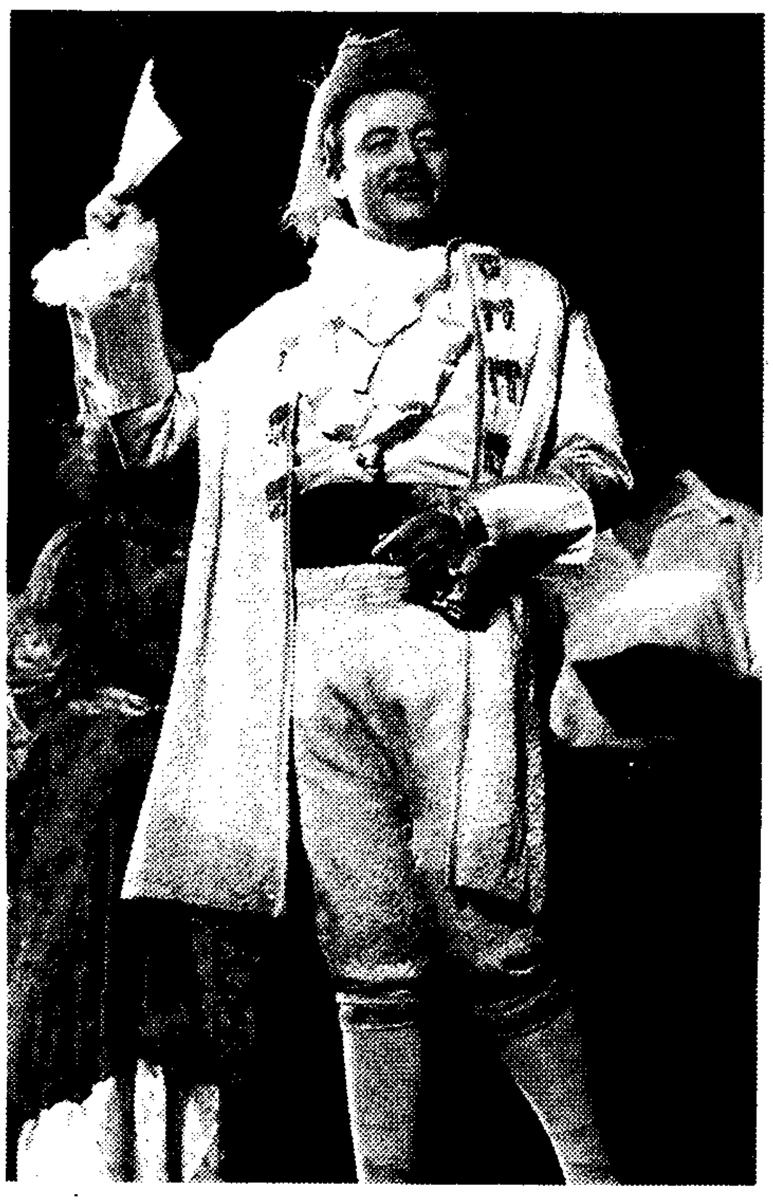
As the children of the St. Albion's Primary School sang in the panto

The bells of Big Ben
Say "Welcome Red Ken"
The Bells of old Bow
Say "Get lost Dobbo"

So 'Turn again Livingstone', and welcome back to the fold!

Your friend

Tony



"Mr Livingstone I presume!"
– Panto Fun last Thursday

Parish Postbag

From the Rev. R. Mugabe in our sister church of Our Lady of the Machetes, Harare

Dear Sir,

Your vicar and his cronies are just a load of shirtlifters and bottom bandits! Let me tell you, I have nothing but contempt for you, Mr. Gayboy Blair, and your boyfriend Gordon.

Yours sincerely
Bob Mugabe

This letter has been cut for reasons of space. A.C.

A Message from Mr. Mandelson

I would like to take this opportunity to scotch all the silly rumours (which have been put about by me) that I am dissatisfied with my boring and depressing job at the St. Gerry's Mission, and would like to return to the vicar's side, to plan the next exciting phase in the great St. Albion's project.

I have certainly achieved a great deal here in Ireland, particularly when I had to close down the mission and told everyone to go home. And it may be that the vicar decides that there is nothing more for me to do, and that any remaining loose ends can be tied up by a lesser member of the team. But that is entirely a matter for the vicar to decide. Over to you Tony!

P.M.

P.S. If anyone has any agreeable flats for sale in the centre of town, I have a friend who might soon be relocating and looking for somewhere to live as near to the vicarage as possible.

Millennium Tent Update

A Message From Monsieur Gerbil

JE suis tres sorry to say que l'Easter Weekend n'etait pas le grand succes que nous hoped for. Helas, je blame votre English weather (ou les showers d'April, n'est-ce pas?). Personne wants to go inside quand il est raining, non? Ca c'est pourquoi seulement trois of ze 8000 tickets nous hoped vendre pendant le weekend d'Easter etaient actuellement purchased. Quel dommage! Mais il faut regarder sur le bright side! Bientot il sera le summertime, et le soleil will brille, et tout le monde sera boarding L'Eurostar pour un happy vacance dans la belle France. Ah! La gaie Paree! La tour Eiffel! Ooh, la, la – les demoiselles topless de St Tropez! Ou peut-etre une gite agreable en Provence, comme votre Peter Mayle! Oh, mon dieu, je wish j'etais back chez moi instead de sitting in cette horrible tente avec le vicaire et le lack de punters et

This update from M. Gerbil has had to be cut short for reasons of space. A.C.

Notice From The Vicar

Like everyone else I was disgusted by the mindless youths who ripped up the vicarage lawn over the May Day holiday. I want everyone to know that I am totally opposed to this sort of behaviour.

I can think of no words to describe the yobs except yobs, and possibly Conservatives. *(Are you sure? A.C.)* And as for defacing the statue of the Very Reverend Churchill – have they no respect for the past? No feeling for the history of this great parish of ours? No time for traditional values? No, they are yobs. That is the only word for them. As it says in the Good Book, "It's not funny and it's not clever" *(The Acts of Violence, Ch. 3, vs. 7-8)*

An exclusive extract from the book everybody is talking about

MONEYsoon

(shurely 'HONEYmoon'? Ed.)

by Amy Jenkins

(Hodder & Stoughton, £600,000)

CHAPTER 1

YOU KNOW, I really wish I'd spent some time looking for a nice man with an interesting life and an interesting personality and all that sort of thing when there were still lots of them around. I mean it's a bit like buying stuff in the shops isn't it, when you go in and ask for a pound of carrots and the assistant or whatever looks at you like they do and says they haven't got any and you say, "What, you haven't got any?" and the assistant looks at you again and says, "They're very popular, carrots." You see if you don't learn these natural laws fast then you'll be looking at an uncomfortably carrotless life, a life without many carrots in it, or something.

And that's it. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. I find half-eaten carrots very upsetting. They have the eerie quality of a footprint in the sand but sadder, sadder than sad, the sad imprint of a life in transit, a life which is going from one place to another.

How much more of this do I have to write? Can't I just do the interviews? And go to meetings in L.A.?

CHAPTER 2

THERE I am in the limo with Jennie and Martha and the others on the way to the hen party when Trish says, "So why are you marrying this bloke anyway? Instead of the other one you met at the party?" And I said, "It's just like Noel Coward's *Private Lives*." And Martha says, "You're lucky he's dead and can't sue," and I said, "Look Martha, I am the kind of person who basically likes to be doing what everyone else is doing. So if everyone's writing incredibly boring novels about silly young women and witless blokes and getting paid huge sums of money for them, then I'm happy to knuckle under." You reap what you sow. It's an abundant universe and all that. *I've got an incredibly busy promotional schedule, you know, Cannes, Melbourne, Hay-on-Wye – you can't expect me to write the bloody thing as well...*

"It was my Joanne's last wish... that I invite our dearest friends round and eat her"

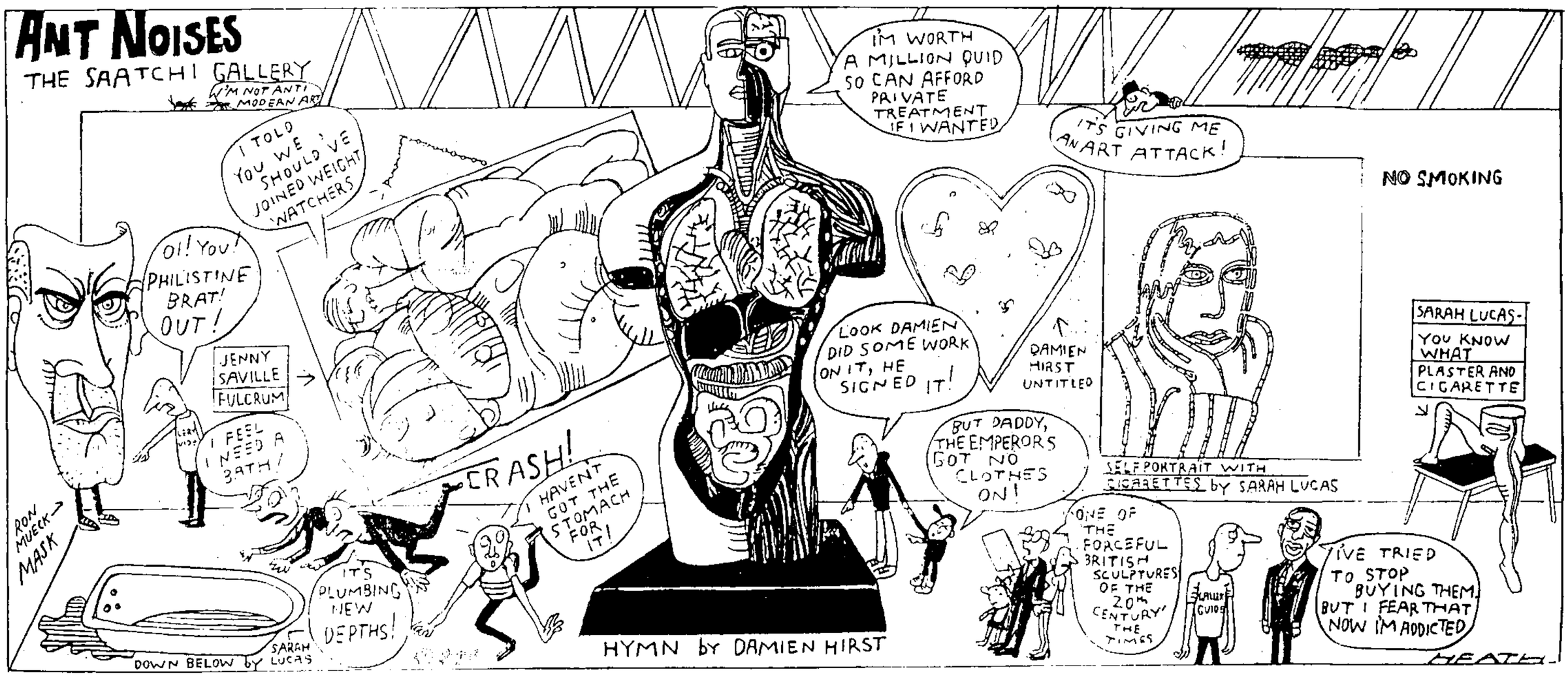
A Hearse Driver writes

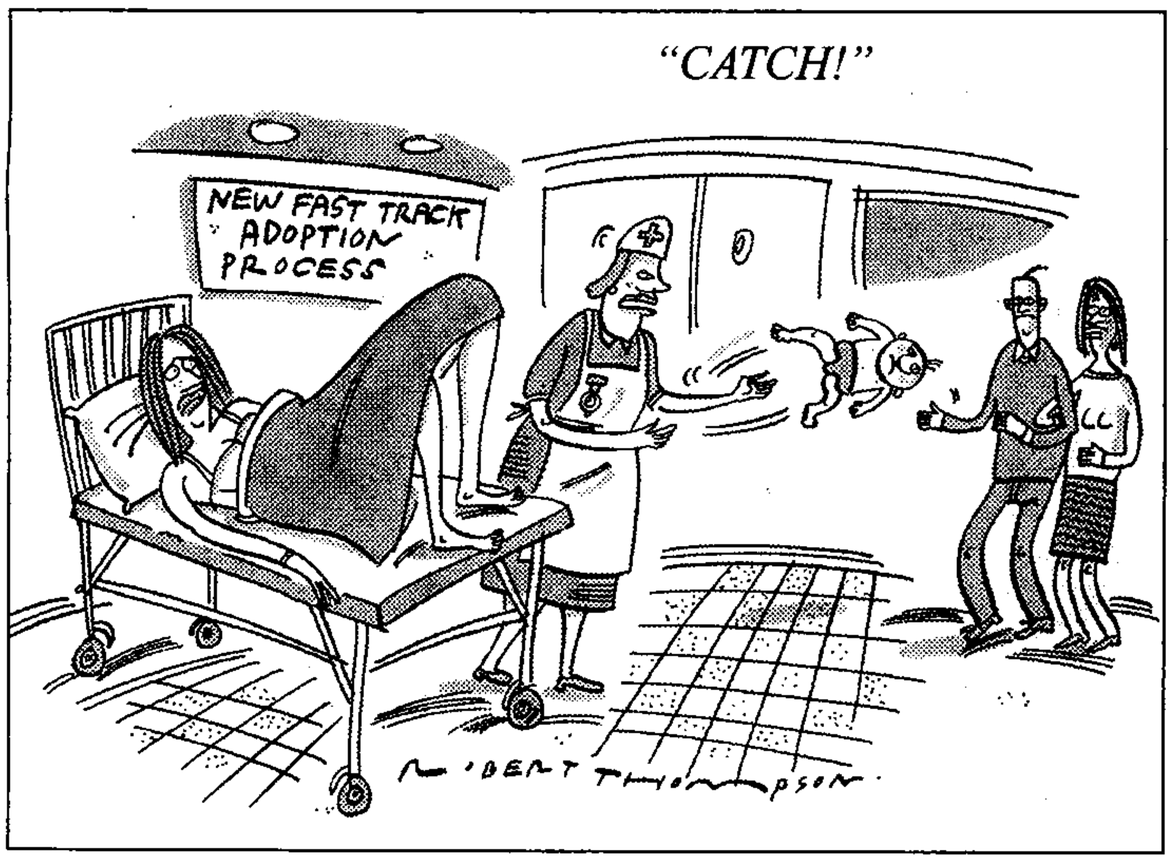
Every week a well-known taxidermist is asked to write about an issue of topical importance. This week **Morty Crem** (Hearse Number 74243) on the Funeral of the late Charles Kray.

Wonderful turnout eh guv? They done you proud, you were a real gentleman and no mistake you looked after your own and you loved your mum and woe betide anyone who said otherwise out with the shooter and bang in the face no nice to see Reggie there though why they had to cufflink him Gawd knows he's harmless now he couldn't even kill a fly though he might tear its wings off and make the little bastard eat them no it's a disgrace you know what I'd do with people like Reggie let him out that's the only language he understands I 'ad your brother Ronnie in the back of my hearse once another gentleman just like all of you they don't make 'em like you any more...

***NEXT WEEK:** The life of another vicious criminal warmly remembered.*

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW


ANT NOISES
THE SAATCHI GALLERY
I'M NOT ANTI MODERN ART
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD'VE JOINED WEIGHT WATCHERS
I'M WORTH A MILLION QUID SO CAN AFFORD PRIVATE TREATMENT IF I WANTED
IT'S GIVING ME AN ART ATTACK!
NO SMOKING
OI! YOU! PHILISTINE BRAT! OUT!
JENNY SAVILLE
FULCRUM
I FEEL I NEED A BATH!
CRASH!
I HAVENT GOT THE STOMACH FOR IT!
IT'S PLUMBING NEW DEPTHS!
RON MUECK MASK
SARAH LUCAS
DOWN BELOW by LUCAS
HYMN by DAMIEN HIRST
LOOK DAMIEN DID SOME WORK ON IT, HE SIGNED IT!
DAMIEN HIRST UNTITLED
BUT DADDY, THE EMPERORS GOT NO CLOTHES ON!
SELF PORTRAIT WITH CIGARETTES by SARAH LUCAS
SARAH LUCAS- YOU KNOW WHAT PLASTER AND CIGARETTE
ONE OF THE FORCEFUL BRITISH SCULPTURES OF THE 20th CENTURY' THE TIMES
I'VE TRIED TO STOP BUYING THEM, BUT I FEAR THAT NOW I'M ADDICTED
HEATH



HAGUE'S NEW BANDWAGON PLEDGE

by Our Political Staff **Simon Hefferlump**

MR William Hague, leader of the Conservative Party, today gave a firm promise that he would jump on any bandwagon that made itself available.

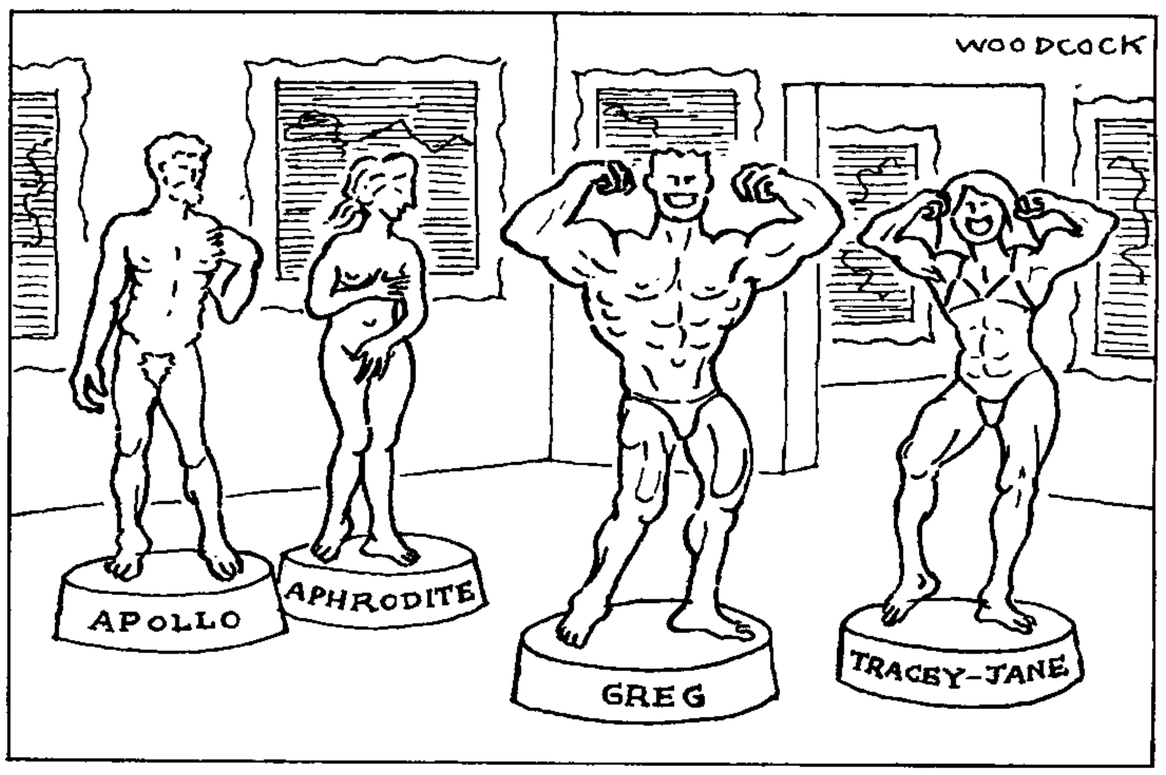
"For too long," he said in his peculiar voice, "we in the Tory Party have stood idly by and watched as a number of bandwagons have rolled past, with no attempt being made to jump on them at all."

THE HAGUE WAIN

"I give you my solemn pledge," Mr Hague continued, "that I will not hesitate to jump, as firmly as is necessary, on each and every new bandwagon that may appear now or at any time in the future."

Mr Hague is 17.

On other pages: ● Shoot Asylum Seekers, Says Hague ● Support Burglar Killers, Says Hague ● Jail Pokemon Bullies For Life, Says Hague ● Restore News At Ten Now, Says Hague ● Ban Rain On Bank Holidays, Says Hague.



TV CELEBRITY 'CONNED FRIEND OUT OF THOUSANDS'

by Our Media Staff **Nick Hellofalotamoney**

A TOP TV star today admitted to having conned a gullible friend out of thousands of pounds by pretending to be the economics correspondent of the BBC.

Sir Peter Jay, 69, the star of such programmes as "Changing Wives", "Maxwell's House Party" and the BBC's Nine O'Clock News admitted that he had asked his close friend Sir John Birt to give him up to £150,000 a year, telling him he needed the money for a "career-saving operation".

In fact, Jay wanted the money to sustain his expensive lifestyle which he had acquired whilst working as car park attendant for the late Robert Maxwell.

However, having given Jay the money on the grounds that he had a serious job, colleagues suspicions were aroused when he never appeared on television at all even when there was a big economics story.

It later turned out that Jay never had an office, a desk or any ability to explain to the viewer how the collapse of the euro would affect world trade.

Doctors say that Sir Peter Jay is suffering from a common psychological condition known as Noel Edmonds Syndrome.

TV HIGHLIGHTS

Changing Rooms *(BBC1)*

Another episode of the ever-popular makeover show. This week presenter Elizabeth Wagstaff considers the distinct possibility that she might have to change her comfortable spacious surroundings for much smaller basic ones with bars on the windows and a bunk bed.

Radio 4

Today Programme
What you didn't miss

John Humbug: So are you going to confront the Zimbabwean Delegation today over their attitude to white farmers?

Robin Cook: Well John, obviously I will be talking to the representatives of the government of Zimbabwe over the unacceptable treatment of...

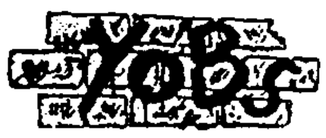
John Humbug: But will you be tough with them? Will you tell them to stop it?

Robin Cook: Well not exactly, John.

John Humbug: Why not?

Robin Cook: Because I don't want them to pour petrol over my head, set fire to me and then chop me up with machetes.

John Humbug: Sorry, I think the line's gone... *(cont 94KHz)*



HUSBAND

That was a late tackle you made on my striker during the game
PUB LEAGUE
THE GLOBE v THE LION
BAR
Late tackle?!.. Hold this..
no mate, that's a late tackle

Opera is well served by Mozart's The tragic Flute performed by the Pegasus Opera Company from Britain on April 28.

Independent (Harare)

19 – 30 years old,
Minimum 5'2" in height (157.5cm)
Educated to GCSE standard or equivalent
Hold an EU (EEA) passport
A confident swimmer

Virgin Atlantic recruitment requirements

PROVISION OF A PRIZE FOR ANNUAL COMPETITION BY PUPILS
THE DORCHESTER COUNTY GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, FO
GOOD ENGLIS WRITING.

View Main charity details

Your Cut Out 'n' Keep Guide To The Craze That's Sweeping The Nation

Yes! It's Pokémon*

*Short for Pocket Money, Pokemon is a Japanese collecting game in which top traders Nintendo PLC collect all your children's pocket money and swap it for worthless plastic cards depicting stupid monsters. For anyone who has missed out on the fun the Eye prints a Who's Who of the top Pokemon characters.

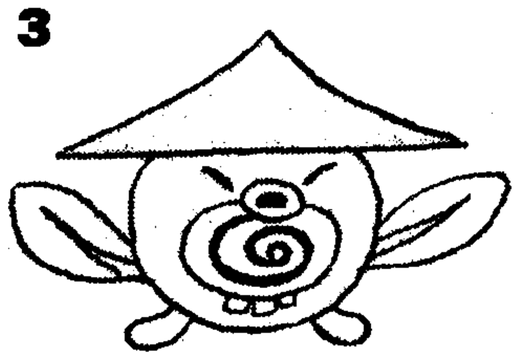
1

PEWKACHUK– supposedly lovable and cuddly Pokemon who actually has power to make purchaser feel sick. Especially at £7.99 in a Booster Pack.

2

PISSAPAW – badly drawn and feeble Pokemon, PISSAPAW evolves into PIKKAFITE when older children start arguing over it. Very common.

3



FRAUDULA – even more common Pokemon due to being badly copied from the original and mass produced in China. Slightly cheaper than real Pokemon but a genuine waste of money nonetheless.

4

CHARMFREE – ill thought-out and unpleasant Pokemon and like all the others guaranteed to cost too much. Pester Power rating of 100.

5

HYPOCON –excitable marketing Pokemon who turns small coins into millions of dollars when trained by dismal Japanese computer expert with beard.

6

PSNOOZER – yet another boring, over-priced *(That's enough Pokemon. Ed.)*

Pokémon GOTTA SPEND IT ALL!

DANDO CASE —

14 MILLION NEW WITNESSES COME FORWARD

by Our Crime Staff **John Stalker**

POLICE investigating the year-old mystery of who shot TV presenter Jill Dando have been "inundated" with calls, following the latest BBC Crimewatch Special on the case.

Said a delighted Inspector "Knacker of the Yard" Knacker, "We've had over 14 million new witnesses coming forward, all of whom clearly recall seeing Miss Dando on television in the last week.

"We will be following up every one of these leads," said Inspector Knacker, "with the aid of 2500 officers drafted in from all over the country, particularly rural areas.

"If it takes 100 years and costs £1 billion," said the inspector, "it will all have been worth it.

"We have clearly narrowed down our search to someone of either sex, between the ages of 0 and 100, who has the psychological profile of a person who might wish to murder a TV personality.

"That is all I can say at this stage. Thank you, gentlemen. Was the tie alright?"

ON OTHER PAGES

Is Sporty Spice Too Fat?
Is Posh Spice Too Thin? **2**
Is Ginger Spice Too Old? **3**
Is Our Editor Too Thick? **4-94**

NISTELROOY of the ROVERS
MELCHESTER ROVERS UNITED ARE £18 MILLION DOWN IN THEIR CRUCIAL BID TO WIN A NEW STRIKER...
WHY DO WE NEED ANOTHER FOREIGN PLAYER BOSS?
BECAUSE WE'VE STILL GOT SOME ENGLISH ONES IN THE TEAM!
COME ON YOU RUUDS
IT LOOKS LIKE THE DEAL IS ON. BUT...
I REFUSE TO DO ANY MEDICAL TESTS!
BUT YOU HAVEN'T A LEG TO STAND ON!
EXACTLY!
COOPER
COME ON YOU RED FACES
WE JUST WANT TO SEE YOU RUNNING!
OK BYE!

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2000 NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

GUTLESS GERMAINE FAILS TO KILL INTRUDER

By Our Entire Staff

IN A tragedy which has stunned the entire nation, fenland recluse Dr Germaine Greer failed to murder a teenage intruder who had broken into her remote East Anglia farmhouse.

Greer, 61, regarded as "a bit of an oddball" by her Saffron Walden neighbours, lives alone in a ramshackle Georgian hideaway with only her geese for company.

Yet, when confronted with a clear opportunity to blast an unwelcome teenage visitor with both barrels of an illegal shotgun, she meekly allowed herself to be tied up and let her friends call the police to rescue her.

What sort of an example does this cowardly behaviour set to the nation's growing army of oddballs and recluses?

If we cannot rely on such people to take the law into their own hands, what sort of a Britain are we handing on to our children?

The Weird World of Batty Germaine

A LONE, unkempt figure in oily Wellington boots and a tattered old mac wanders over the fields scattering kitchen leftovers to an eager gaggle of hungry geese.

"Eat that, you bastards!" she shrieks in a gruff Australian accent.

She has become a hermit, shut off from the world behind the ivy-clad walls of her tumbledown retreat.

Occasionally, she is disturbed by malicious journalists disguised as homeless cripples, who abuse her hospitality and then mock her in the pages of the Daily Mail.

No wonder that *(cont'd. p. 94)*

New Spring Books

The Female Bastard by Germaine Greer
The Hell Woman by Dr Germaine Greer
Useless Women Poets 1642-1911 by Dr Germaine Greer
Aren't Women Awful? by Dr Germaine Greer
(Cont'd. p.94)

ADVERTISEMENT

JOIN THE ARMY AND SUE THE WORLD!

In today's army, it's not all shooting and killing. Some of the biggest battles you'll have to fight will be in the courtroom! It'll take determination, courage and a very expensive lawyer!

But don't worry! The army will take care of you, giving you state of the art legal representation, to ensure that you win maximum compensation for all the stress and trauma we've caused you!

THE BRITISH ARMY

"Better law, law, than war, war!"

Issued by the Ministry of Defence lawyers

"It's amazing what you can learn at evening classes these days"

INFINITE EXPANSION 'A FACT'

by Our Science Correspondent
Patrick Moore-Guff

IT HAS been revealed that newspapers' ability to fill their pages with half-baked research nicked from minor scientific journals will grow exponentially, and will not collapse in on itself as had been previously thought.

"The number of journalists left in the office after mass sackings is in inverse ratio to the number of blank pages needed to be filled, which means there's nothing to stop this phenomena expanding at an astonishing rate to fill an entire paper," said a notable *(Cont p. 94)*

ON OTHER PAGES

Is the Universe made out of Jaffa Cakes? **2**
Circulation discovered to be 'flat' **94**

The Daily Telegraph

1000 Years of the Daily Telegraph

THOUGH there are those who will not have it in the house, nevertheless we feel on balance that for the Daily Telegraph to have survived for 1000 years is an occasion for modest celebration.

It is true that from time to time the famous Telegraph front page gives offence, with its photographs of Liz Hurley in a state of undress, and such crude headlines as "Hague Bounces Back As Blair Poll Lead Plummets".

But on the other hand, the paper has given the nation a gallery of immortal comic characters, ranging from the elderly W.F. Deedes, with his memories of covering the Crusades, right down to the young Lord Snooty figure of Charles Moore, with his beagling cap and Old Etonian tie. And surely one can forgive them anything when one thinks of the wonderful phrases they have given to the English language, such as "Whither the Euro?", "Save the RUC" and "Vote Conservative".

TORIES: SELF-DEFENCE JUSTIFIED

by Our Political Correspondent **William Rees-Mugger**

THE leader of the opposition, Mr William Hague, today defended his call for new laws to protect those on the receiving end of unprovoked attacks.

"Everyone has the right to defend themselves by any means at their disposal," he told supporters. "If someone is picking on you because you are weak and hopeless then you are entitled to do *anything* to save yourself.

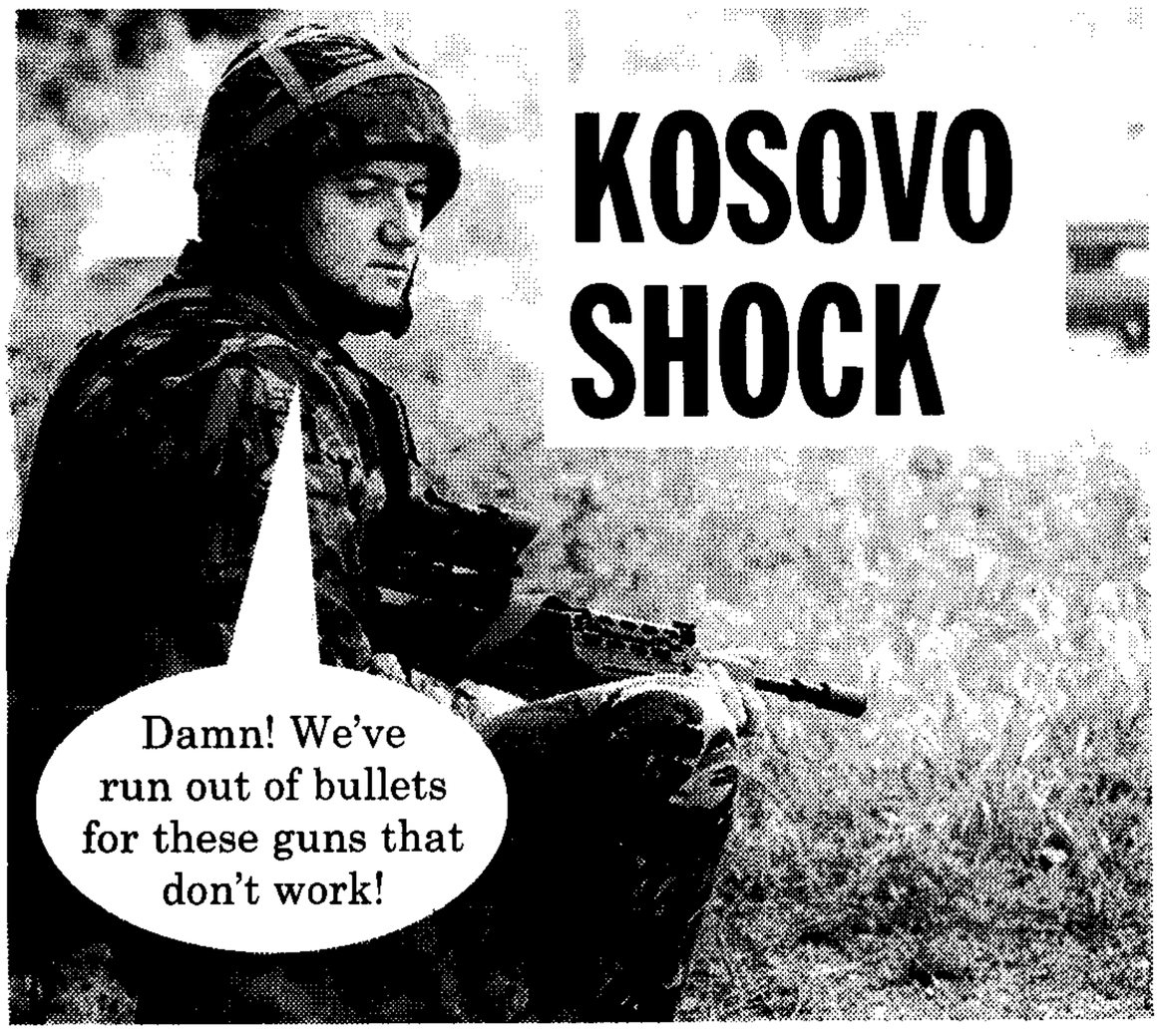
TWELVE YEAR OLD BORE

"This must include," he continued, "using any weapon that is at hand, including desperate speeches about law and order and frenzied assaults on asylum seekers."

Hague quoted the recent sad example of an eccentric Yorkshireman who had been left to live alone in a deserted old Conservative Party. He was subject to repeated attacks by a gang of habiutal politicians who had given him a kicking and stolen all his policies.

"Surely," said Mr Hague, "this man had no option but to shoot himself in the foot? And surely it is grossly unfair for him to be blamed for his tragic actions?

"No," he concluded. "I am the victim here, not the dangerous criminal Tony Blair."



Letters to the Editor

The Martin Case

SIR – For centuries it has been a cherished tenet of English law that an Englishman's home is his castle and that he has an inalienable right to defend his property against unwarranted intrusion by any means available to him, not excluding the detonation of a low-yield nuclear device should that seem appropriate. In the immortal judgment of Lord Justice Denning (1402-1998) in the case of Farmer Giles v. the late Nosher Stibbs, "Whomsoever ye may be, be ye ever so high or ever so low, if ye durst break in and enter upon ye dwelling place of a sovereign subject of Her Majestie Ye Queene Elizabeth ye Firste, ye shall not be surprised if ye aforesaid householder shall blast thee to Kingdom Come, and may God have mercie upon your soul."

What could be clearer than that?

LT. COL. B. FROBISHER
Auberon St Waugh
Somerset.

SIR – Having lived in the depths of rural Norfolk for more than half a century, I can testify that we count ourselves fortunate if we see a policeman once in a lifetime. Sadly, one came to our house only last week and, so surprised was I by his sudden appearance, that I shot him, under the misapprehension that he was an intruder. This means our local force has been reducd to zero. When will the Government act to remedy this disgraceful situation?

REV. JOSIAH BLUNDERBUSS
Widdecombe St Ann
Norfolk.

SIR – Having lived in the depths of rural Somerset for more than 10 minutes, I have now been burgled 87 times. Is this a record?

MRS SARAH BIRDBATH
The Old Breakin
Wrigley Chewett, Som.

SIR – Whatever next? Are we going to be arrested in our own homes for reading the Daily Telegraph?

MR DAVE TWERP-SMYTHE
Via e-mail.

SIR – Am I the first person in this part of rural Buckinghamshire to hear the welcome sound of the first shotgun of spring?

SIR H. GUSSETT
The Old Shooting Range
St Engun, Cornwall.

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the retirement of Michael Heseltine MP

So. Farewell
Then
Michael Heseltine,

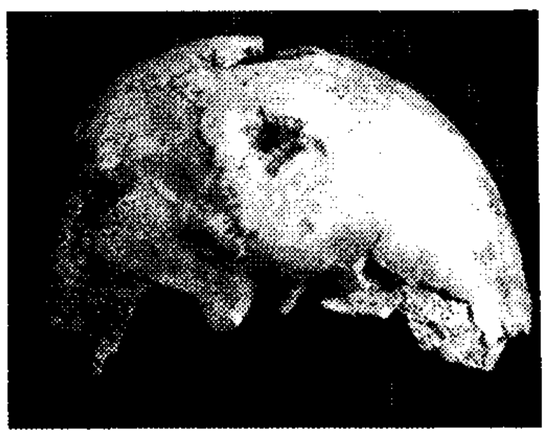
Universally known
As Tarzan.

Except Tarzan
Was the King
Of the Jungle.

And the nearest
You got
Was Deputy King.

You never made
It to the
Top of the tree.

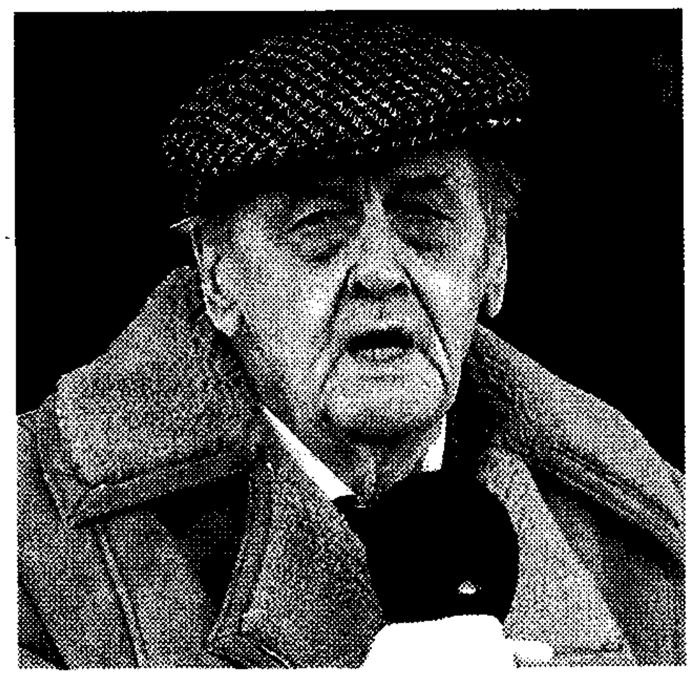
Edgar Rice Thribb (17½)



IS THIS MAX HASTINGS' SKULL?

See Page 94

DIARY



THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE'S A-Z OF ENGLISHNESS

A is for ancestors. I am thinking in particular of the 7th Duke, the Marquess of Nuneaton, who held many of the very highest offices of state by dint of his magisterial moustaches, and of whom it was said that he never ventured beyond his drive without a flowerpot on his head. A natural conservative, as Home Secretary he placed an immediate ban on the new-fangled device known as the fire extinguisher, which, he declared in his deliciously languid drawl, was "most disagreeable". Sadly, during the long heatwave of '23 his flower pot caught fire and the blaze soon spread to his moustaches, but, true to his word, he refused an extinguisher to the very end. A is also for Antarctic. Frightfully chilly, or so they say.

B is for Basingstoke. Not a town one has chosen to visit all that often, I fear.

C is for Chess. I have to be careful here, but the knight is, quite frankly, an awfully *common* piece, forever jumping sideways at the last minute, like a cat on a hot tin roof, whatever that may be. Pawns are dreadfully dreary, too, don't you think? I suspect they come from ***Basingstoke***.

D is for Debo. She's a woman, of course, but I've always admired that in a wife.

E is for Enema. My great aunt Enema gave her name to the famous medical procedure. Extraordinary lady. Whenever she used to stay at Chatsworth, she would turf all our gubbins and bric-a-brac out through the back door.

F is for fish. Fish are so very English, don't you think? My ancestor, the 4th Duke, was half-fish on his mother's side. They say he had her fingers. She was one of the Smoked Salmons of Gloucestershire. Her beautiful pink complexion was often remarked upon. I have nothing against fish, which is not to say one would want one's daughter to marry one. Of course, as an Englishman one must always save all fish bones. Bound together with a decent bit of string and sellotaped to the ceiling, they make excellent television aerials.

G is for galoshes. No English gentleman should ever wear his galoshes to a masked ball, unless the ballroom has first been flooded to make him feel more at home.

H is for halo. St John the Baptist was an ancestor of mine. He was supposed to have taken religion rather seriously, but they say he did awfully well. I myself have never spent a great deal of time in the wilderness. It doesn't greatly appeal.

I is for irreplaceable. I once mistook a Ming dynasty teapot for a clay pigeon. To my great sorrow, it was irreplaceable.

J is for Jockey Club. Racing is tremendously important to the English. There is no more democratic institution than the Jockey Club. It's open to absolutely everyone in racing. Except for the jockeys, of course.

K is for Rudyard Kipling. "If" is the most marvellous poem, full of good sense. If I should die, think only this, that and the other. Some corner of a foreign land. You be a mango, my son. Et cetera. Memorable.

L is for Lawn Tennis. If we're conjuring up the perfect English scene, can we do better than to sit out in the sunshine, drinking squash, sucking strawbugs and watching the girls in their short skirts as they bend right over for a low volley? Well done, girls! Well done, indeed!

M is for Mitford, a very English family. My wife Debo is a Mitford. Then – let me see – there was Decca, the record producer; Becca, who played at Wimbledon; Necca the nymphomaniac; Mecca, who toyed with becoming a Muslim, and Pecca, the pioneering anorexic.

N is for Nuisance. Hats can be the most dreadful nuisance if worn on anywhere but the head.

O is for Oxford Marmalade (*always* pronounced Maw-maw-lad). Since time immemorial, the Cavendishes have spread their marmalade on the bottom of their toast. I adhere to this family tradition but I regret to say the marmalade does not always adhere to the toast. More often than not, it prefers to fall on one's chin or one's bib, and when replaced on one's plate it tends to stick to it. For this reason, we mix our Oxford marmalade with a little glue – Gripfix or Uhu – and that seems to do the trick, though it ruins the taste. O is also for Orphan. Orphan is not a word in my vocabulary. I prefer to do things seldom, if at all.

P is for Pinter. Harold has quite a number of bees in his bonnet, poor fellow. Did he grow up in Basingstoke, perhaps? I rather think he must have done. But Antonia is a second cousin on my mother's side, so we are pleased to have the two of them over for tea. One tries to show an interest in the theatre, of course. I once told him how much I had enjoyed an amusing little play called "The Birthday Suit", and I wondered if he had had anything to do with it? He looked a little broody, then told Antonia to get her coat, it was time for offs. Oh dear. Did I put my foot in it?

Q is for the Queen, who, in half a century, hasn't put a foot wrong. An absolute treasure. She is sometimes good enough to drop in on Chatsworth to "help out" when our regular staff are away on their hols.

R is for Reading. Oddly enough, I passed through it once on the way to Wiltshire.

S is for Spam. We don't grow it here, but I'm told it's marvellous for filling in holes in walls and so forth.

T is for Torture. I once spent three days without my valet, Henry. Imagine having to walk around with one's shoelaces untied for three days! One kept tripping over.

U is for Uncle Harold (Macmillan). He was a remarkable character. He had the most agreeable manners, and would never stab someone in the back without making a beautiful apology afterwards.

V is for V-neck. Invented by the 6th Duke, who had grown sick to death of staggering around, blind as a bat, in a jersey without a hole to its top.

W is for Walthamstow. The family owns Walthamstow, though I've never been able to locate it on a map.

X if or Xenophobia. Such a silly business. Some of our most loyal staff are foreign. And the Italians are good at singing.

Y is for Yell. The English gentleman never yells; he employs someone to yell for him.

Z is for Zeus. A cousin on my mother's side; by all accounts quite a character, if a mite Greek.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

JOHNSON, THIS FILE IS MY PRIVATE LETTERS AND DIARIES FROM THE '70s REVEALING MY MENTAL ANGUISH AND TORMENT AT THE TIME...
IT WOULD BE DYNAMITE IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. I WANT YOU TO TAKE CARE OF IT, OKAY?
AS YOU WISH, SIR...
AND I DON'T WANT YOU DOING WHAT BRIAN EPSTEIN'S CHAUFFEUR'S JUST DONE - SELLING IT AT AUCTION WHEN I'M DEAD.
OF COURSE NOT, SIR.
I'LL SELL IT ANONYMOUSLY TO A PAPER TOMORROW.
GOOD MAN. AND TIP OFF MY P.R. WHEN YOU'VE DONE IT.

Literary Review

Klein and fall

The Running Mate
Joe Klein
(Chatto & Windus, £16.99)

JOE KLEIN? In the sad and sticky annals of late-twentieth century US politics, Joe Klein will have a hulking footnote all to himself. A veteran stateside political hack — currently Washington correspondent of the New Yorker — Klein not only produced the worm's eye Clinton burlesque Primary Colors ("its portrait of a charming, ambitious, amoral young Southerner on the way to the White House struck an instantly recognizable chord" as the blurb will have it), he also did it anonymously.

Gallons of ink got wasted in the hunt for the putative author, our man issued a stream of oddly Clinton-esque denials before finally coming clean, and there was some serious head-shaking about the probity of authors, as if anyone ever bothered about that.

The Running Mate, Joe's meaty follow-up, ploughs a similar furrow. This time round our main man is a Viet vet named Charlie Martin (Klein has already admitted that the idea came to him after a chat with the Arizona senator and erstwhile Republican presidential hopeful John McCain), a 51-year-old Democrat making a "premature" bid for the White House and fetching up in a whole heap of trouble. Yes sir, we know he didn't grope the babe in the car but that doesn't stop her chunky dad from laying him out in full view of the cameras.

With the presidential bid down the can, there's a Republican challenger making the running in his home state while the press is seriously, and I mean seriously, interested in the foxy, royal-related English lady he's squiring to the clambake fundraisers.

You get the picture? Leaving aside the larksome drollery of real people wandering around under invented names, the reception of a work like The Running Mate on this side of the pond is invariably coloured by the suspicion of a minor artistic divide: that the Yanks, for reasons connected with history, access and expertise, are able to "do" political novels in a way that the British cannot. True, up to a point; and yet according to strict definition Mr Klein's humdinger is not actually a political novel. It is merely a novel in which the majority of the characters happen to be politicians — in other words, just the usual American collection of wild-eyed Yankee dements and sleazeballs deviously emoting and chasing tail, for whom "politics" is a kind of spiritual insurance salesmanship, just stuff that they do.

For all that, The Running Mate isn't at all without interest as an illustration of some of the incidental tics and deformities that afflict the contemporary American novel. For a start, much of it will be more or less incomprehensible to anyone without a degree-level understanding of the chain of social inferences by which upper-society America administers itself. "Brad Farley came first and seemed straighter than most arrows... son of a gimp, of course: Lieutenant James Farley, left leg lost at the knee, Philadelphia Naval Hospital, 1967. Brad was Navy ROTC, out of Vanderbilt." Or: "Lynn Thurston lived in an understated but perfect white brick center-hall colonial on a very good street in Cleveland Park." In each case a basket-load of clan- or caste-based assumptions is wheeled proudly into view for decoding by the bewildered outsider audience.

Undeniably, all this has a certain pizzazz – but style-wise the thing is unbelievably conformist. The American novel has a predominating tone these days: the wisecrack. Its characters don't converse with each other, they simply banter limply away. "Donna said you were trying to get real. My question is, how real are you trying to get?" Or: "Can I say something insulting?" "Be my guest." "You did a dumb-guy thing." There are pages of this lame, smarty-pants small-talk, which have the additional disadvantage of giving the characters a further smokescreen behind which to conceal themselves. Accurate, perhaps, in its picture of professional badinage, but horribly dull to read.

"There comes a moment in most good dinner parties, but in every bad one, when the conversation become general," Klein writes at one point, which is about the nearest we get to the laying down of any kind of behavioural law. The Running Mate is full of these odd strainings for perspective, but its real distinction lies in the carefully assembled minor detail. Ten out of ten to Mr K for providing a tip-top Washington style guide, maybe; but for a real political novel, rather in the way of Charlie's presidential opponent, the Trollope gets my vote.

Books & Bookmen

■ HAVING withdrawn *Leonard of Mayfair* — the Hutchinson autobiography of former celebrity crimper Leonard Lewis — on the eve of publication following a libel threat from actress Rachel Ward, Random House seems less than interested in rescuing anything from the situation.

A reprint of the book omitting the offending section – in which Lewis suggested he and Ward had once been lovers — has been ruled out and the rights have reverted to Lewis following repayment of part of his advance.

On the face of it the publisher's resolute action seems to suggest it has tightened its response to potential libel actions since last year's row involving George Harrison, Mick Jagger, Caroline Coon and Cape author Jonathon Green (see *Eyes passim*) over Green's 60s chronicle *All Dressed Up*. Copies of the hardback were finding their way into the remainder trade long after the courts had declared it libellous to Harrison and Jagger, and the publisher decided to rush-release the paperback before Coon's case had even been heard.

However, friends of Lewis suggest that Random House's motivation has been less high-minded than it appears. Ward saw the allegation about the affair in the newspaper serialisation, for which Random House received a large amount of money. Having been thus remunerated, the publisher decided to cut its losses and bail out — the advance sales for the book having been respectable but disappointing.

Lewis, who has rather fallen on hard times since his glory days and now lives in a south London council flat, is now free to take his book to another publisher, probably one who will regard the controversy stirred up by Ward as a publicity godsend.

■ WHILE the general book trade continues to cut its throat in an effort to provide big discounts and low, low prices, legal publishing seems to be going in the other direction.

Before the 1999 access to justice act, every law firm working within the legal aid system was required to purchase a copy of the *Legal Aid Handbook* when it was updated once a year. The 1998/1999 edition, published by Sweet and Maxwell, cost just £13.50 in paperback. Now that the act has come into force, however, the old LAH has been replaced by something called the *Legal Services Commission Manual*, once again published by Sweet and Maxwell and a *sine qua non*; but this time consisting of four volumes of looseleaf material, costing £125 in total. Further expensive looseleaf updates are anticipated during the course of the year, the purchase of which will again be a legal requirement.

A few in the profession have been gleefully suggesting that the hike is a case of "the biter bit", some legal aid practices having been less than scrupulous in their charging policy. However, their joy has been tempered by the mystery surrounding Sweet and Maxwell's victory in the tendering process. Apparently, the contract was put out to tender but no other legal publisher can recall being informed of the opportunity. As a result, many are worried that Sweet and Maxwell now has something approaching a monopoly on these essential texts, and that more 925 percent price increases are on the way.

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
HAVE YOU GOT THE MAX HASTINGS BOOK?
IT'S THE ONE OVER THERE IN THE FLAK JACKET
IT'LL BE THE FIRST INTO THE REMAINDERS SHOP
GOING TO THE WARS
GOING TO THE WARS
OH MY GOD! I'VE BOUGHT IT!

IN THE BACK

ANDERSEN INSULTING

HOW much has the government's favourite consulting company been let off paying in compensation it owes for the historic cock-up of the NIRS2 pension computer system? Nobody knows and the government will not say. Asked persistently by the *Eye* for an answer, the treasury press office cannot provide one.

The company, as *Eye* readers may already have guessed, is Andersen Consulting, part of the huge Andersen conglomerate which has spent so much time and money in recent years sucking up to "new" Labour.

Patricia Hewitt

In the summer of 1996, for instance, the entire Labour frontbench – about 100 MPs – were taken on freebies to an Oxford college where they were "trained" by Andersen executives in the art of government. Then there was the hiring of Chris Wales, a former Andersen tax expert, as chief adviser to Geoffrey Robinson when the latter became paymaster-general; and the promotion of Patricia Hewitt as Andersen Consulting's head of research when she was a lowly-paid adviser on new Labour's think tank, the IPPR.

Hewitt is now the government's "minister for e-business". Luckily she was not the minister chosen to explain the recent government windfall for Andersens following a nasty dispute over the firm's catastrophic cock-up of the contract for NIRS2, the reorganisation of the national insurance system which has led to so many delays in the assessment and payment of pensions.

The treasury minister who did have to find an explanation was "new" Dawn Primarolo. But she was obviously too busy to bother the Commons with a full response. In a written answer she told the House: "It would not be sensible or cost-effective to seek further compensation from Andersen Consulting beyond the amount of £4.1m which was paid for delays in 1997 and 1998. I am satisfied that taking action against Andersen Consulting would prejudice the partnership relationship now established between it and the Inland Revenue. This is essential to the delivery of future changes to the system in support of the government's national insurance and pensions and welfare reform proposals."

Dawn Primarolo

The real meaning of this "partnership relationship" was explained by a jubilant Peter Holmes, Andersen's managing partner for government services. He told *Computer Weekly*: "The structure of PFI deals means the contractor owns the intellectual property rights to the system and licenses the government to use the asset. Inevitably that means the balance of power is shifted towards the contractor." Or to put it another way: "We contractors have got the poor old government and the taxpayer over a barrel (even when we make a mess of their contracts)."

How much more than the £4.1m should the government have claimed for the NIRS disaster? The *Eye* first asked the treasury on 25 April. On the 28th, an Inland Revenue spokesman revealed that "we cannot give you that figure".

Tender is the oversight

THE "dynamic of competition" is the government's proudly-trumpeted justification for its policy of PFIs (private finance initiatives) for new hospitals.

But the justification took a bit of a knock from the national audit office (NAO) and the public accounts committee (PAC) which revealed recently that the new hospital at Gravesham had been handed over without even a pretence at competition to the "Pentland" consortium, mainly composed of Carillion, a firm once known as Tarmac.

Now the *Eye* can reveal three more cases where hospitals in the first wave of PFI are being built by private consortia without competition. The contracts to build new hospitals at South Durham, Barnet and Carlisle have been handed over to Balfour Beatty, Bouygues and Amec respectively — all without a whiff of competition.

Bouygues, a French firm, is specially lucky. Not only did it get £50m government money to sweeten the Barnet contract, but its subsidiary Ecovert gets a £150m contract to run services in the hospital for 30 years. Bouygues of course has been plagued with allegations of cartel-fixing and anti-competitive behaviour and for greasing the palms of political parties in France. But none of this has stopped "new" Labour handing it a large hospital without another tender in sight.

Salmon stakes

During January storms 256,000 farm fish did a bunk from Orkney Sea Farm (OSF) cages in the world's largest ever fish farm escape. The Pinky & Perky of the Scottish salmon farmer's fan club, "Red" John Home Robertson, Scottish executive fisheries minister, and Prof David Mackay, north region director of Seap (*sic*), the Scottish environment pollution agency, rushed to aid OSF after a whistleblower broke the story.

Cooed Red John: "In Orkney it's less of a problem because you haven't got salmon rivers here, so the escaped fish are not going to compete with wild fish. It wasn't such a big deal as far as these islands are concerned." Nobody appears to have pointed out to the clueless minister that the defining characteristic of fish is that they can swim – certainly a few miles across the Pentland Firth to invade famous salmon rivers such as the Thurso, Naver, Helmsdale and Brora.

In any case, according to John Home Robertson, the fish farmer wasn't to blame: it was God what done it. "I mean," said the minister, "acts of God do happen at sea. We-all know that." Prof Mackay was equally supportive. He described the escape as being: "A very unfortunate incident arising from a weather-related problem, something you can't really legislate or plan for." About the only thing you *can* plan for in Orkney is the certainty of foul weather and regular storms.

However, so far God has not "owned up" to loading the platform surrounding the cages from which the fish escaped, designed to hold 10 tonnes, with 38 tonnes (1,520 sacks) of fish farm food. Nor will God say how many fish died as a result of His stupidity or why the seabed for several miles around is littered with plastic bags and rotting fish food.

Perhaps God could also explain why, at the time of the escape, there were 14 cages on site, rather than the 10 approved to be there by Seap? This is a clear breach of the discharge consent for the site. And why did God install another four cages a couple of weeks ago, without any reference to Seap?

Getting answers to these questions – from either God or any of the so-called regulatory bodies – will be difficult. Seap says: "The escape of fish from farms does not come under Seap's legislative remit." Scottish Natural Heritage ("working with Scotland's people to care for our natural heritage") says: "Salmon farms are not required to inform us directly in the event of incidents involving escapes." Orkney Island Council says: "Any issue concerning the disposal of dead fish would be a matter for Seap." Yup, it's another glorious cock-up (see *Eye* 999) for John Home Robertson.

Hostel witness

THE shocking case of Ruth Wyner and John Brock, voluntary charity workers in Cambridge who were jailed for five and four years respectively for allowing heroin to be supplied at their shelter for the homeless, does not seem to have stirred the indignation of other charity workers in the same field in the city.

Ruth and John were strongly opposed to the circulation of drugs at their hostel. Their crime was to refuse to hand over to the police the names of people whom they had banned from the hostel for suspected drug dealing. They refused the information under a long-standing confidentiality agreement which had been supported by the police (see *Eye* 995).

Their prosecution and sentence might have been expected to attract forthright opposition from the Liberal Democrat party, with its long tradition of hostility to excessive sentences in drugs cases, and from others in charge of homeless hostels in Cambridge.

Gaynor Griffiths qualifies on both counts. She is a Lib Dem candidate in this month's local elections and has ambitions to become chair of the city's housing committee. She is also on the advisory board of the English Churches Housing shelter in Cambridge. And that shelter, like every other charity which provides accommodation for homeless people, also has problems with drugs. In the last 18 months nine people have died of drug abuse in the English Churches Housing shelter in Cambridge.

So far the reaction from Griffiths to the sentence on Wyner and Brock has been strangely muted. This may have something to do with the fact that she appeared, albeit under subpoena, as a prosecution witness in their case.

Sweet FO

THE foreign office won a lot of favourable comment for its publication of the *Torture Reporting Handbook*, which has some moving passages about the importance of circulating information about torturers.

"Each piece of reliable information meticulously collected," explains the handbook, "is a weapon in that struggle [to eradicate torture], and every door thrown open is one less door for the torturers to hide behind." So what about all those ugly stories about death squads in Columbia which kill and torture children – stories which were circulating during the recent visit of President Pastrana of Columbia to Britain? The foreign office spokeswoman approached by the *Eye* about possible hypocrisy involved in British arms sales to Columbia was most indignant. "Whose allegations are these?" she asked about the death squads – "the Campaign against Arms Trade?"

Er, no actually. The main source is the British home office, which publishes "country assessments" to help establish the stories of asylum seekers. The latest assessment on Columbia pulls no punches about the death squads there. "The emergence of the self-defence units organised mainly by property owners in the 1980s marked the beginning of the conflict which has lasted up to the present day. These anti-guerrilla groups/paramilitary death squads were associated with the drugs trade and are also believed to have links with the security forces."

And again: "Reports by non-governmental organisations suggest that the police and armed forces have been responsible for serious human rights abuses, including activity in paramilitary death squads, and have been implicated in torture and beating detainees."

The unofficial response of the ethical foreign office has been to sanction the sale to Columbia of semi-automatic pistols, heavy machine guns, military explosives and "components for optical target tracking surveillance acquisitions systems". (See the current issue of the government's *Strategic Export Controls Annual Report*).

The official response from the FO spokeswomen was the remark that arms sales to Columbia was "an unusual story for *Private Eye*". Anyone there remember the *Eye's* Arms-to-Iraq coverage?

HARDIE AMISS

THE refusal of the request from counsel for the prosecution of the two Libyan suspects for the 1988 Lockerbie bombing for a further delay to the start of the trial has been greeted with relief by relatives of the dead. They recall that ever since the bombing eleven and a half years ago, the authorities in Britain and in Libya have caused delays.

First there was the delay caused by official certainty that the people responsible were Palestinians recruited by the government of Iran. Then there was delay caused by the sudden switch of suspicion towards the two Libyans, and the long political battle to secure their extradition for trial in Holland.

In February there was more delay caused by the surprise announcement that the chief prosecutor, Scottish lord advocate and Blairite peer Lord Hardie, was abandoning the trial altogether so he could become a high court judge.

Hardie had been a pivotal figure in the authorities' handling of the Lockerbie disaster. During the last Tory administration he served as deputy crown spokesman at the 1990-1991 fatal accident investigation into the disaster. Both he and his boss, Tory cabinet minister Lord Fraser, infuriated the bereaved relatives by insisting that the inquiry could not even discuss key issues surrounding the bombing, including anything connected to the criminal investigation.

Hardie's abrupt decision to cut off all connection with the trial only two and a half months before it was due to begin was greeted with consternation by the relatives. On 18 February Pam Dix, secretary to UK Families Flight 103, whose brother died at Lockerbie, wrote to Lord Hardie to express the families' "great surprise and indeed shock" at his decision. "I would be grateful," she continued, "if you could clarify whether the decision was yours alone". So disturbed was the noble lord by this anxious letter that he did not bother to reply.

Susan Cohen, whose daughter died at Lockerbie, told Radio Scotland that Lord Hardie had personally promised her he would oversee the entire trial, and said she was "appalled and amazed" at his decision to abandon it. In the Scottish parliament, SNP leader Alex Salmond asked Scottish first minister Donald Dewar why the lord advocate, whom Dewar had appointed to his cabinet, had "broken his word to this woman". Dewar replied that Salmond was being "a little overdramatic" – a charge instantly rebuffed as "inappropriate" in a letter to Dewar (also unacknowledged) from Pam Dix.

Meanwhile an associated matter continues to worry the bereaved families. The Lockerbie Air Disaster Trust was set up after the bombing to assist any families "who may require help" and also "to help those who suffer in other disasters". Another aim of the trust was to assist the people of Lockerbie by rebuilding and renovating the town.

The trustees were headed by Sir Hector (now Lord) Monro, former Tory MP for Dumfries. In 1991 the trust was wound up and replaced by the Lockerbie Trust, whose aims make no reference to the needs of the families nor to the victims of other disasters. Lord Monro has been replaced by Russell Brown, the new Labour MP for the area. All the other trustees are councillors for Dumfries and Galloway, who plan to spend the current funds exclusively on community projects in Lockerbie, which since the disaster has become a popular tourist destination.

Michael Stone

Keep off the grasses

THE inquiry by Hampshire police's Det Supt Graham Tarrant (now retired) into Kent police's handling of the horrific murder in June 1996 of Dr Lin Russell and her six-year-old daughter Megan took even longer than the original murder inquiry. It has ended with the predictable all-clear.

The delay has kept Michael Stone, who was convicted of the murder in July 1998, in prison for another year while he waits for an appeal, now expected in the autumn. Thanks at least in part to a long campaign by Jo-Ann Goodwin of the *Daily Mail*, Stone's appeal is likely to be notable for the fact that the slender evidence that convicted him is falling apart.

Though the murder was carried out with a hammer in scenes of the most appalling bloodshed and brutality, there was no direct or forensic evidence against Stone. The blood and saliva tests at the scene of the crime pointed not to Stone but to someone else. A suspect car seen in the area at the time did not belong to Stone, nor could Stone have been the man seen loitering suspiciously in the neighbourhood.

Pretty well all the remaining evidence came from prison grasses – the familiar fall-back of desperate prosecutions. There were, it was claimed, nine grasses who were prepared to give evidence of Stone confessing in prison. In the event only three did so. The evidence of the three has been greatly damaged, as the grasses retract and fall out.

Barry Thompson publicly withdrew his version of a Stone confession almost immediately after the trial. His explanation of why he lied in court was plastered all over the front page of the *Mirror*. The second alleged confession was even less credible. It came from convicted murderer Mark Jennings, who had to admit taking money from the *Sun* in exchange for his evidence (with a promise of more *Sun* money after the trial).

The only half-credible grass left is Damien Daley who said he was in a cell next to Stone's when the latter was brought in to Canterbury prison on remand. One problem with Daley's story is that Stone, on his own insistence, was immediately placed in solitary confinement. Daley told the court that Stone, in a fit of gratitude for Daley's keeping violent prisoners at bay, had whispered his confession down a drainpipe while he lay on the floor of the cell next door.

The *Eye* understands that even this remaining sliver of "evidence" may be dealt a knock-out blow at the appeal if Barry Thompson gives an account of a recent conversation he had with Daley in which Daley effectively admitted that his story about the confession was concocted in return for dropped charges and "comfort" from the prison authorities. Daley is now living a charmed life in Folkestone.

If Michael Stone, as now seems clearer every day, had nothing to do with the Russell murders, who did? This tantalising question is likely to be met by Kent police in the time-honoured tradition of police forces whose most-publicised prosecutions are overturned on appeal. No doubt a senior officer will be available to announce to the media that his officers have seen or heard nothing to challenge their original opinion.

World of Bullshit

KNACKER of the Yard has called in international research consultants, Surrey-based MVA, to tell him what is wrong with the Metropolitan police complaints procedure.

This is curious given that the home office has already handed over huge sums of taxpayers' money to KPMG, whose staff have for several months been carrying out the same task and are due to report any day now.

It is doubly curious, however, when you consider that the decision comes just three years after the government's home affairs select committee, and two years after European Council human rights monitors, recommended abolition of an inherently biased system that gives police control of investigating themselves even when the matter involves someone's death.

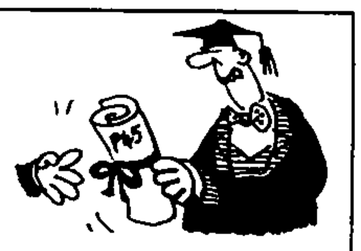
Absolutely fuming

OH DEAR. Ansett Airlines had hardly finished explaining that it had corrected a "design fault" which caused fumes in the cabin of its British Aerospace-manufactured 146 aircraft than another similar plane was hit by an identical problem.

The pilot of an Ansett freight airliner en route from Sydney to Melbourne on 30 March was so overcome by fumes he became dizzy and his vision blurred. He was forced to don an oxygen mask, and was taken to hospital as soon as his plane landed.

The chairman of the Australian senate committee of inquiry into aircraft safety was obviously not impressed with so early a sign that Ansett airline's assurances are not always reliable. He promised a rigorous quizzing of the airline at the committee's next hearing.

High Principals



Barkering mad

MAY we offer our grovelling apologies to Prof Kenneth Barker, whose worth we underestimated when we mentioned in *Eye* 999 that a lecture theatre and life-size statue had been erected in his honour when he stepped down as vice-chancellor of De Montfort University last September?

A mere statue and lecture hall could not alone constitute befitting gifts for a man of Prof Barker's high-standing. An original piece of music for string quartet was also composed in his honour by Sally Beamish and performed by the resident Schidlof Quartet.

Employees of the university, grief-stricken at the departure of their beloved leader, also clubbed together to buy him a painting by Denis de Caires, entitled "Red History", although cruel rumour-mongers have insinuated that the staff collection did not raise sufficient funds to pay for the work of art and the university had to look to alternative sources.

No brainer

THE University Court of St Andrews, headed by rector Andrew O'Neil, carefully considered where to build a new psychology lab for research into brain behaviour.

The court came up with the brilliant idea of putting up a two-storey building in one of Scotland's oldest recorded gardens, which dates back to 1550 and is situated behind the medieval St John's House in the centre of town.

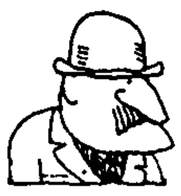
The garden has long been an oasis for students and lecturers at the medieval history department which occupies the property. Fife council says there have been an unusually high number of objections to the project – 80 so far and rising.

Brewer's droop II

THE further education funding council (FEFC) seems even more devoted to this column than it was last year.

Just as the last Eye appeared with its small piece about East Yorkshire College in Bridlington, the college got a surprise visit from the FEFC's chief executive David Melville. At a stroke Mr Melville reversed the conditions of service of the principal, David Brewer, taking him back to four months' redundancy pay if he is sacked (rather than the 12 months which, as reported in the Eye, he had awarded himself).

In addition two FEFC nominees have been placed on the college governing body with specific instructions to monitor the management. Brewer has been told to get the college solvent in two months.



In the City

WHEN he was asked during the Hamilton libel trial why he needed more than £100,000 a week cash in "walking round money", Mohamed Fayed famously replied: "It's none of your bloody business." But equally interesting and unanswered questions are — how does the phoney Pharaoh afford £5m a year and what is the source of this river of readies?

These questions are particularly pertinent because of the millions Fayed has expended in recent years on his personal pursuits — litigation, more litigation and even more litigation plus expensive hobbies such as Fulham football club and Punch. Furthermore, this spending spree has come at a time when Fayed's income from his Harrods cash machine has been in steep decline.

Dividends paid to the Bermuda partnership which owns the Knightsbridge emporium have since 1995-6 gone from £40m to zip in 1998-9. A similar zero sum is expected for the year to last January, for which figures are still awaited.

Dividends since 1996 total £74m. But presumably Fayed's two brothers receive the odd million. And then there is the little matter of tax. The dividends may be tax-free in Bermuda, but any payback from them or related benefits Fayed receives in Britain most certainly would not be.

Because Fayed has lived in Britain for so long, he could well be caught by the Inland Revenue's "deemed domicile" and "resident" rules. If so, any income or benefits he receives here could be taxed at 40 percent. And as the £100,000 a week shows, there are lots of benefits.

Yet strangely the Harrods accounts are silent on just what its ruler receives. The highest paid director of Harrods Holdings, the top company in the pharaoh's pyramid, received merely £159,000 — less than two weeks' Fayed pocket money. There is brief mention in the Harrods accounts of payments charged or made for services provided on Fayed's behalf such as security, rent, helicopters, etc. These total £2m but do not seem the full picture.

Which brings us back to litigation. Not since Maxwell went bob, bob, bobbing along has there been a litigant like Fayed. He has spent millions on lawyers and private detectives and related expenses. Yet little of this has he recovered through winning his case and being awarded costs.

Consider the record. Millions spent unsuccessfully trying to overturn the report into his takeover of Harrods which exposed him as a phoney pharaoh. More millions spent and still spending in pursuit of a British passport. Further millions spent suing Vanity Fair before walking away. Similar if not bigger sums spent defending the Hamilton action, with little or no chance of meaningful recovery from the likely headed-for-bankruptcy ex-MP. Up to £5m spent losing the Rowland safe deposit action including paying £1.6m in damages plus another probable £1m in Rowland costs. Six-figure sums have gone out in costs and settlements with former employees such as sacked security boss Bob Loftus or in funding third party actions which Fayed sees as helping to rewrite history.

Such bills would disturb even Microsoft Croesus Bill Gates. Yet Fayed keeps on paying. But where does the money come from? Certainly some payments appear to come from Harrods' bank accounts. But does that mean the company is paying? If so, why are such payments not reported in its accounts?

Then there is the more than £20m and still counting pumped into Fulham which faces another season in the profitless Nationwide wilderness. Not to mention the more than £10m that has gone down the Punch plughole.

Either Fayed is draining the offshore fortune he stacked away before the Harrods dividends dried up, or there is another source for all this spending. Cynics wonder if the answer lies not in Swiss bank accounts but nearer home — in the £400m that flows through the Knightsbridge tills and the £340m provided by Fayed's bankers to Harrods Holdings. After all, it is a private company. But just how much of all this spending, especially on legal fees and settlements, is allowable as a company expense.

THE Serious Farce Office is desperately seeking to avoid justifying its nickname, after a run of good results, over the Andrew Regan affair.

Regan continues to sit in Monaco facing no extradition hearing despite a warrant for his arrest in Britain and the committal for trial of two alleged accomplices and beneficiaries of his largesse. A chapter of errors and indecisiveness has led the SFO to the edge of a potentially hugely embarrassing PR disaster.

Instead of immediately seeking to charge Regan, months were wasted in fruitless negotiation with his lawyers trying to persuade him to return from his Monaco bolthole. Some hope!

The failure to even issue a warrant for his arrest until last October — for actions taken in 1995 and investigated since 1997 — may yet prove terminal. Especially as it appears that the £2.4m theft charge — regarding a payment made from his company Hobson — may not be covered by the 1898 extradition treaty between Britain and Monaco. The archaic treaty has already ruled out any corruption charge.

The SFO is now trying to find a way through the Monaco maze with the aid of French legal experts. But will it all be too late? SFO insiders say the Regan charges will not be time-barred, perhaps because they have already filed a notice of intent to extradite even if they have not actually started the ball rolling.

But there is no air of confidence that Regan will be returned to stand trial. There is also the prospect of a trial that does go ahead with the often fatal "missing man" defence available.

But worst of all is the possibility of a repeat of the Lloyd's fiasco in which the Minet/PCW pillaging Peters, Cameron-Webb and Dixon, were allowed to sit out the SFO investigation in the United States until it was too late to extradite them.

WANNABE peer Eliott Bernerd may be facing a little local difficulty as a result of the legal problems of his biggest backer, Hong Kong billionairess Nina Wang.

The Hong Kong courts in March appointed managers for the estate of her suspected murdered property tycoon husband Teddy Wang as a result of the dispute over his empire between Nina and Teddy's father.

"Jim is in recruitment"

The cause of the family feud is Nina's refusal to declare her husband dead despite his kidnapping and disappearance almost 10 years ago. This enabled her to exercise control over the multi-billion Chinachem empire until late last year, when Wang senior won a court ruling that Teddy could be declared dead.

At issue now is the Teddy Wang will, which his father Wang Din-shin says makes him the sole beneficiary. Nina claims there is a second, later will which cuts her in not out. But that will remains in a sealed envelope.

Meanwhile Wang senior has asked the court to prevent any assets being diluted or leaving Hong Kong. It is also believed that accountants are tracing what Nina Wang has done with Teddy's money since he disappeared. And that is where the man who would be Lord South Bank comes in.

Nina Wang poured millions into his Chelsfield group as well as less successful Bernerd ventures in Russia and Britain — remember Inter Lotto? The losses in Russia and Inter Lotto were expensive for the diminutive Nina and may raise questions about why such investments were made and what influence her friend Elliott had in the decisions.

Meanwhile it is said that the Chelsfield boardroom is a far from happy ship as a result of Bernerd's more recent deals. Good works may yet prove not enough to produce that coveted "gong".

BRITAIN, the European Union, the United States and other major countries are campaigning to crack down on tax havens. This pressure has created growing panic in the Channel islands which seek to make out that they are "clean" offshore financial centres not "dirty" tax havens like those Caribbean and Pacific islands.

But consider just three recent news items from the septic isles of Jersey and Guernsey.

In March advocate Peter Mourant from leading Jersey law firm Mourant du Feu & Jeune asked for £1000 of confiscated drug money to be returned to his client, a convicted heroin smuggler jailed for six years so that he could pay defence costs. The request was refused by the court.

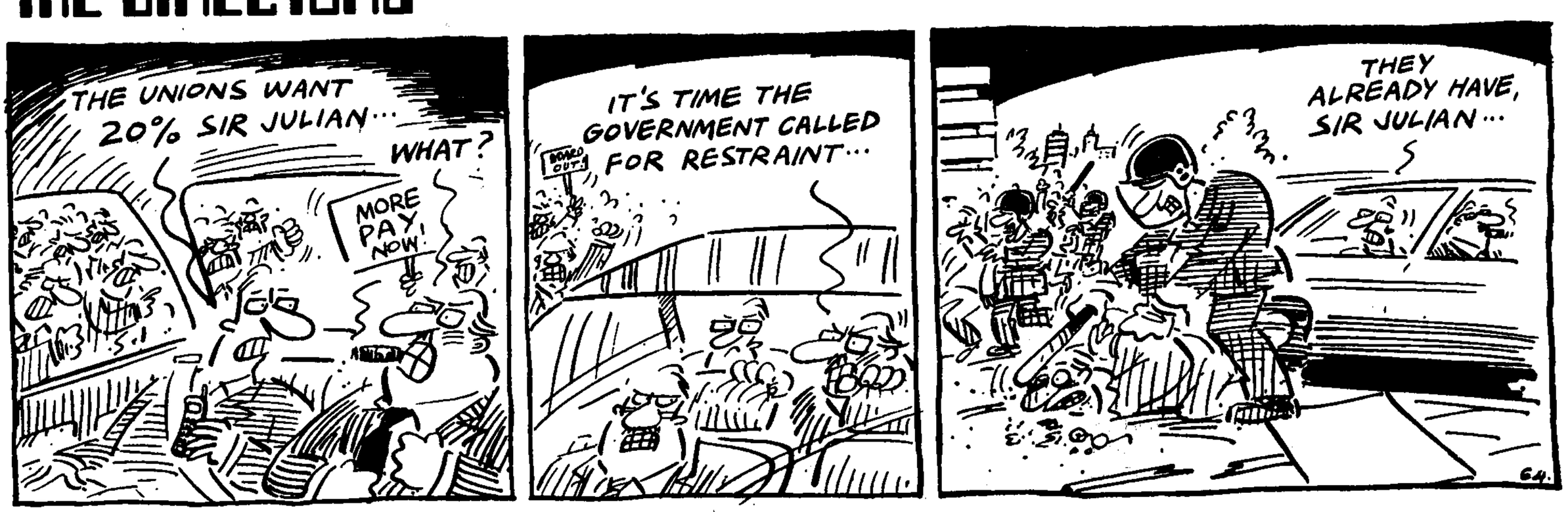
Earlier this year a survey estimated that tightening the rules on regulation of and disclosures by companies and fund managers would cost the islands £22 billion in lost cash which would go to more accommodating havens. That represents 15 percent of the funds managed.

A year ago Jersey senator and one of the island's legislators Jerry Dorey pleaded guilty to importing hard core pornographic videos featuring torture and degradation. He eventually resigned as a senator but has been reelected as a deputy. No, you couldn't make it up!

'Slicker'

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG



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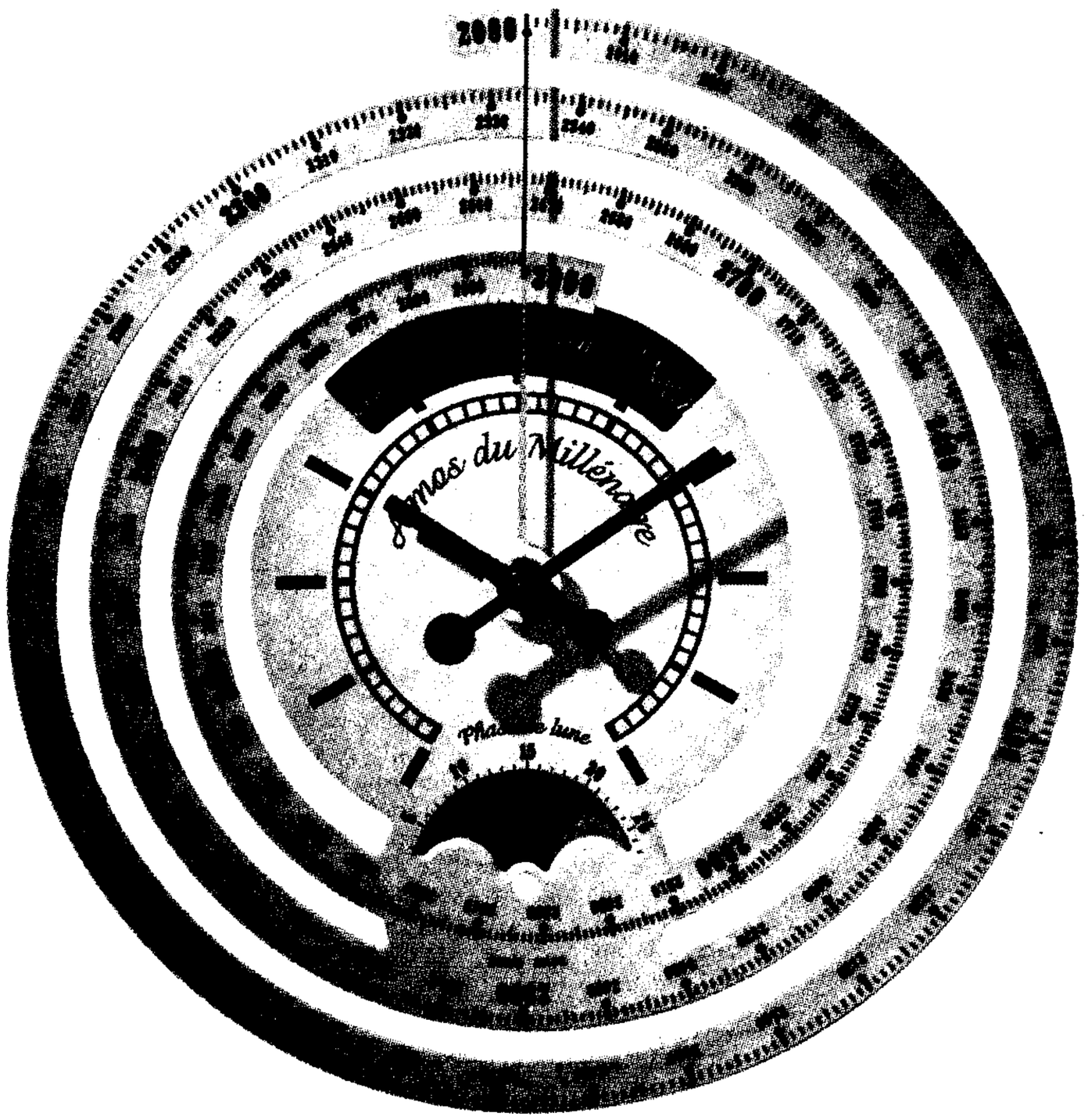

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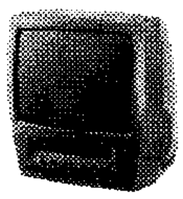

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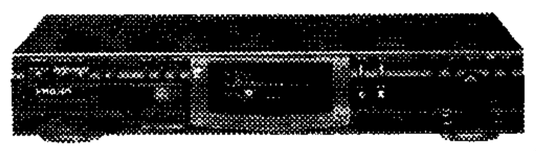

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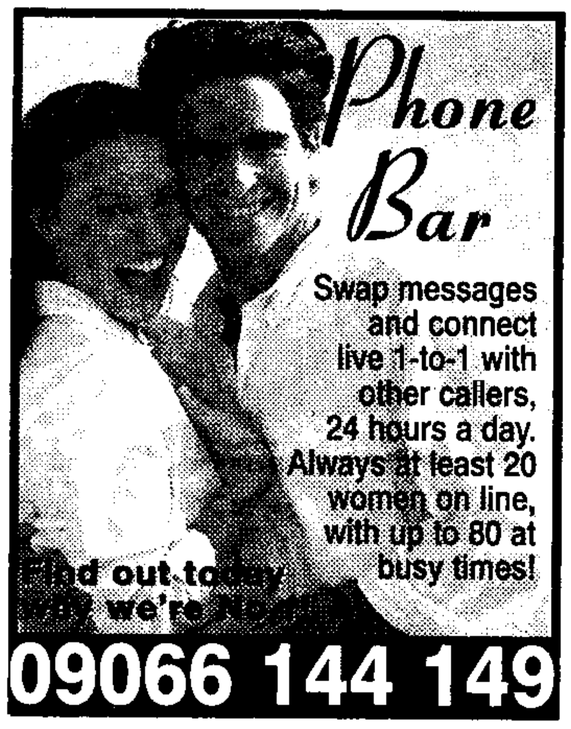
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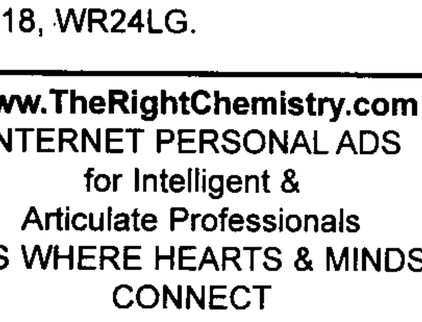

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DIVORCED MALE, 40's – silly SOH – seeks married female. London/Kent. Box 1901.

HANDSOME MASTERFUL entrepreneur, M/40, seeking younger sleek erotically unassertive liberated F/partner – 07050 398943.

GLAMOROUS, attached, n/s lady wants attractive, discreet, professional man. Evenings out, regular exciting evenings in. Phone/Photo please. Edinburgh/Glasgow. Box 0101.

TALL, STRONG, FIT man, 36, looking for sensual female to share naughty times, daytime or evening. Sense of fun, taste for adventure + interests in the naked male required. East Anglia. Box 1201.

ATTRACTIVE, SLIM, fit, dark-haired, professional lady, 34, living near Croydon (Surrey/Kent border), seeks attractive, fit, professional gentleman, 30-40 – for evenings out and fun. Box 1501.

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TALL, STRICT, successful, assertive man, Reading/South West, 40 – seeks a naughty younger woman to share the delights of Summer with. I love eating out and eating in, nights on the town and weekends in the country and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with some spice then please write to me with your telephone number to Box 0198.

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TALL, EDUCATED, divorced and handsome man seeks attractive, affectionate, 40ish lady to share life's ups and downs. Southern England. Box 3401.

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TALL, SLIM, attractive brunette female, 44, seeks unattached male for walks, chats and lots of laughs. North London. Box 3301.

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ENERGETIC FEMALE professional, seeks caring, sporty male to share common interests. Photo appreciated. Box 2101.

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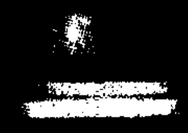

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